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SERMONS

PREACHED UPON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

BY ROBERT SOUTH, D.D.

PREBENDARY OF WESTMINSTER, AND CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

A NEW EDITION, IN FOUR VOLUMES,

INCLUDING

THE POSTHUMOUS DISCOURSES.

VOL. III.

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THE

CHIEF HEADS OF THE SERMONS.

VOL. III.

For chief heads of Sermon I. see p. xviii. vol. i.

SERMONS II. III. IV.

DELIVERANCE FROM TEMPTATION THE PRIVILEGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

2 PETER II. 9.

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.

MAN's condition, with reference to temptation, is so desperate, that without the assistance of a superior good spirit he cannot be an equal match for the evil one, 16. And the text sets forth to us the signal mercy of God to the godly or truly pious persons, 18, in delivering them from all temptations or trials, chiefly such as are designed to corrupt them, 20.

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2. Of being supported under it, 25.

3. Of being brought out of it, 28, when the temptation has in some measure prevailed; for there are several degrees, *ib.*, viz. seduction, 29, enticement, *ib.*, consent of the will, *ib.*, commission of sin, 30, and the habitual reigning of sin, *ib.* Into which last state those scarcely fall who are actually in a state of grace, 31.

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1. The soul's utter loss and damnation, 53.
2. Loss of a man's peace with God and his own conscience, 55.
3. Temporal judgments of God in some signal and severe affliction, 57.
4. The disgrace and reproach which it casts upon our Christian profession, 60.
With some useful inferences, 63, and directions for a man not to be peremptory with God in his prayers for any particular enjoyment or state of life, 64, but to acquiesce in the state allotted him by Providence, 65.

SERMON V.

THE HAPPINESS OF BEING KEPT FROM THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION.

REVELATION III. 10.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, therefore will I keep thee from the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world, to try the inhabitants of the earth.

Nothing more sets off the greatness of God's mercy in delivering his people out of temptation, than the critical time of his vouchsafing it, 66. For
I. There is a certain proper season and hour, which gives a peculiar force and efficacy to temptation, 67.
II. A temptation attains its proper season and hour by these means, 69:
1. By the original, universal corruption of man's nature, 69.
2. By every man's particular corruption, 69.
3. By the continual offer of alluring objects agreeable to it, 70.
4. By the unspeakable malice and activity, the incredible skill and boldness of the tempter, 71.
5. By God's just judgment, in commissioning this evil spirit to tempt at a rate more than ordinary, 71.
6. By a previous growing familiarity of the mind with the sin, which a man is tempted to, 72.
7. By a long train of gradual, imperceivable encroaches of the flesh upon the spirit, 73.
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1. By an unusual concurrence of all circumstances and opportunities for the commission of any sin, 74.
2. By a strange averseness to, if not a total neglect of, spiritual exercises, prayer, reading, and meditation, 75.
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SERMONS VI. VII.

HOW AND BY WHAT WAYS GOD DELIVERS US FROM TEMPTATION.

1 COR. X. 13.

God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

True faith is bottomed upon God's infinite wisdom and power; who alone is able to give a full and absolute deliverance out of temptation, 82. Some of the principal temptations, which threaten most the souls of men, are,

1. A public declared impunity to sin, 94.
2. The vicious examples of persons in place and power, 95.
3. The cruel oppressions of men in their persons, liberties, and estate, 95.
In opposition to which, we must consider,
1. That the strongest temptations to sin are no warrants to sin: and
2. That God delivers only those who do their lawful utmost to deliver themselves, 96.
The deliverances out of temptation are of two sorts,
1st. Those whereby God delivers immediately by himself and his own act, 98. As,
1. By putting an issue to the temptation, 83.
2. By supplying the soul with mighty inward strength to withstand it, 86.
3. By a providential change of a man's whole course of life and circumstances of condition, 90.
4. By the overpowering operation of his holy Spirit, gradually weakening, and at length totally subduing the temptation, 92.
From these considerations, that God alone can deliver out of temptation, and that the ways by which he does it are above man's power, and for the most part beyond his knowledge, 99, we may deduce these useful practical consequences:
1. That the estimate of an escape from temptation is to be taken from the final issue and result of it; that a temptation may continue very long, and give a man many foils before he escapes out of it: which affords an antidote against presumption on the one hand, and despair on the other, 99.
2. No way out of any calamity, if brought about by a man's own sin, ought to be accounted a way allowed by God for his escape out of that calamity or temptation, 101. Nor,
3. To choose a lesser sin to avoid a greater, 103.
4. When a temptation is founded in suffering, none ought to be so solicitous how to get out of it, as how to behave himself under it, 106.
5. There can be no suffering whatsoever, but may be endured without sin, 107.
Since to be delivered out of temptation is of an infinite concern, and since the tempter has so many advantages over us; we should be so much the more careful to use such means as our Saviour himself has prescribed to us, viz. watchfulness and prayer, 109.

SERMON VIII.

WATCHFULNESS AND PRAYER A SECURITY FROM TEMPTATION.

MATTHEW XXVI. 11.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.

In the Christian man's warfare, the two great defensatives against temptation are watching and prayer, 111.
I. Watching imports,
1. A sense of the greatness of the evil we contend against, 112.
2. A diligent survey of the wit and strength of our enemy, compared with the weakness and treachery of our own hearts, 113.
3. A consideration of the ways by which temptation has at any time prevailed upon ourselves or others, 115.
4. A continual intention of mind upon the danger, in opposition to idleness and remissness, 118.
5. A constant and severe temperance, 120.
II. Prayer, 123, is rendered effectual by,
1. Fervency or importunity, 125.
2. Constancy or perseverance, 125.
Lastly, watching and prayer must always be joined together; the first with-

out the last being but presumption, and the last without the first, mockery, 127. Which is shown by two instances, in which men may pray against temptation without any success, 128.

SERMON IX.

THE FOLLY OF TRUSTING IN OUR OWN HEARTS.

PROVERBS XXVIII. 26.

He who trusteth in his own heart is a fool.

Of all the cheats put upon a man by trusting, none is more pernicious than that of trusting his own heart, 130, and resigning up the entire conduct of himself to the directions of it, as of an able and a faithful guide, 131. The folly of which will appear by considering,

1. The value of the things we commit to that trust, 131, viz.

(1.) The honour of God, who is our Creator, our Lord, and our Father, 132.

(2.) Our happiness in this world, with relation both to our temporal and spiritual concerns, 133.

(3.) Our eternal happiness hereafter, 135.

2. The undue qualifications of that heart to whose trust we commit these things, 137, which

(1.) Cannot make good the trust, because of its weakness, in point both of apprehension and of election, 137.

(2.) Will not make it good, because of its deceitfulness, 138. Which shows itself in several delusions, that relate either to the commission of sin, 139, or to the performance of duty, 143, or to a man's conversion, 145.

Since therefore the heart is so deceitful, and to trust it is inexcusable folly, we ought to trust only in the conduct of God's Holy Spirit, who will lead us into all truth, 147.

SERMON X.

THE HOPE OF FUTURE GLORY AN EXCITEMENT TO PURITY OF LIFE.

1 JOHN III. 3.

Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

A Christian, though he has great privileges and hopes, yet ought not to presume, but prepare himself for future glory by the purity of his life, 148. Having considered, how a man may be said to purify himself, and to such a degree, 149, "even as Christ is pure," we shall in these words observe,

I. What is implied in a man's purifying of himself, 150, viz., to rid himself,

1. Of the power of sin; which consists in bewailing all his past sinful acts, 150; in a vigilant prevention of future ones, 151. And this will be effected by opposing every first sinful motion, 153; by frequently performing severe mortifying duties, 154; by often using fervent prayer, 155. Whence we may perceive the error of those who pursue the reformation of some particular sins only, 157, and of others, who only complain of the evil of their nature, without endeavouring to amend it, 158.

2. Of the guilt of sin, 158, which can be expiated by no duty within man's power, *ib.*, but only by applying the virtue of Christ's blood to the soul through faith, 160.

II. How the hope of heaven does purify a man, 161, viz.

1. Upon a natural account, as it is a special grace, in its nature contrary to sin, 161.

2. Upon a moral account, by suggesting to the soul arguments for purification, 162; such as these; that purity is the necessary means to the acquisition

of eternal happiness, *ib.*, that it alone can qualify the soul for heaven, *ib.*, that it is a duty we are obliged to out of gratitude, 163, that it only can evidence to us our right in those glorious things that we hope for, 164.

From all these every one may gather a certain criterion, by which to judge of his hope as to his future happiness, 164.

POSTHUMOUS SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE HUMILIATION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

EPHES. IV. 10.

He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.

Christianity, in those great matters of fact upon which it is founded, happily complies with man's mind, by affording proper objects to affect both the pensive, sad, and composed part of the soul, and also its more joyful, serene, and sprightly apprehensions: which is instanced in many passages of Christ's life, from the humble manger attended with angels, to his descent into the grave followed by his miraculous resurrection and ascension, 169. This last great and crowning passage, however true, still affords scope for the noble actings of faith; and since faith must rest itself upon a divine word, such a word we have here in the text, 170. Wherein are four things considerable;

I. Christ's humiliation, implied in these words, "he that descended," 171. The Socinians answered concerning Christ's descent according to his divine nature, 171. And an inquiry made as to the place, whither he descended, "the lower parts of the earth;" which, 1. Some understand simply of the earth, as being the lowermost part of the world. 2. Some of the grave. 3. Some of hell itself, the place of the damned. 4. The Romanists, by the help of this text, have spied a place called purgatory, or rather the pope's kitchen, 172. These words may bear the same sense with those in Psalm cxxxix. 15, and be very properly taken for Christ's incarnation and conception in the womb of the blessed Virgin, 173; and that upon these grounds:

1. Because the former expositions have been shown to be unnatural, forced, or impertinent, and there is no other besides this assignable.

2. Since Paul here uses David's very words, it is most probable that he used them in David's sense.

3. The words *descending* and *ascending* are so put together in the text, that they seem to intend a summary account of Christ's whole transaction in man's redemption, which was begun in his conception, and consummate in his ascension, 173.

II. Christ's glorious advancement and exaltation, "he ascended far above all heavens;" that is, to the most eminent place of dignity and glory in the highest heaven, 174.

III. The qualification and state of Christ's person, in reference to both conditions: he was the same. "He that ascended," &c., which evinces the unity of the two natures in the same person, 175.

IV. The end of Christ's ascension, "that he might fill all things." "All things" may refer here, 1. To the scripture prophecies and predictions.

2. To the church, as he might fill that with his gifts and graces. Or 3. (which interpretation is preferred) to all things in the world, 177; which he may be said thus to fill in a double respect.

1. Of the omnipresence of his nature, and universal diffusion of his godhead, 178.

2. Of the universal rule and government of all things committed to him as mediator upon his ascension, 179.

It remains now that we transcribe this into our lives, and by being the most obedient of servants, declare Christ to be the greatest of masters.

SERMON II.

THE END AND DESIGN OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

EPHESIANS IV. 10.

That he might fill all things.

These words are capable of a threefold interpretation.

1. "All things" may refer to the whole series of prophecies and predictions recorded of Christ in the scriptures, which he may be said to fulfil by his ascension, 181.

St. Paul vindicated against the Jews' charge of perverting the prophet's meaning in that eminent prediction, Psalm lxviii. 18, 181.

2. "All things" may refer to the church: which sense is here most insisted on, 182.

The church, from its very nature and constitution, has unavoidably a double need or necessity, which it is Christ's prerogative to fill, 183.

1. In respect of its government. Hereupon he "gave some apostles, some evangelists, some prophets, some pastors and teachers," 183.

2. In respect of instruction: for this Christ made a glorious provision by the diffusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, 184. In which passage two things are observable:

I. The time when. Which is remarkable in respect,

1. Of Christian religion itself, it being about its first solemn promulgation, 184.

2. Of the apostles. It was when they entered upon the full execution of their apostolic office, 185.

II. The manner how the Holy Ghost was conferred; namely, in the gift of tongues, 187. And as these tongues were a proper representation of the gospel, so the peculiar nature and efficacy of this gospel was emphatically set forth by those attending circumstances of the fire and the mighty wind, both of which are notable for these effects, 1. To cleanse. 2. To consume and destroy, 188.

SERMON III.

ON DILIGENCE IN THE WORK OF RELIGION.

JOHN IX. 4.

The night cometh when no man can work.

The sense of the text naturally lies in three propositions,

1. That there is a work appointed to every man to be performed by him, while he lives in the world, 190.

Man, as he is, 1. a part or member of the body politic, hath a temporal work, whereby he is to approve himself a good citizen in filling the place of a divine, lawyer, &c., 191.

2. As a member and subject of a spiritual and higher kingdom, he has also a spiritual calling or profession of a Christian; and the work that this engages him to is threefold,

1. Making his peace with God, 193.
2. Getting his sins mortified, 194.
3. Getting his heart purified with the proper graces and virtues of a Christian, 195.

II. That the time of this life being once expired, there is no further possibility of performing that work, 196.

The word by which the time of this life is expressed, viz., "a day," may emphatically denote three things.

1. The shortness of our time. 2. The sufficiency of it for our work. 3. The determinate stint and limitation of it, 196, 197.

III. That the consideration of this ought to be the highest argument for using the utmost diligence in the discharge of this work, 197. Which requires all our diligence, 1. From its difficulty, *ib.* 2. From its necessity, 198.

SERMON IV.

DIVINE ASSISTANCE PROMISED TO CHURCH GOVERNORS.

[Preached at the consecration of Dr. Seth Ward, Bishop of Oxon.]

JER. XV. 20.

I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, to save thee and deliver thee, saith the Lord.

Presbytery, derived by some from Jethro, came first from Midian, a heathenish place. Their elders are mentioned sometimes in the Old Testament, but their office not described. A superintendency of bishops over presbyters may be argued, from the superiority of the priests over the Levites, much better than they can found their discipline upon the word *elder*, 201, 202. But if God instituted such a standing superiority and jurisdiction of the priest over the Levites, these two things follow:

1. That such a superiority is not in itself absolutely irregular and unlawful.
2. That neither does it carry in it an antipathy and contrariety to the power of godliness.

And yet upon these two suppositions, as if there was something in the very vital constitution of such a subordination irreconcileable to godliness, are all the presbyters commenced, 201, 202.

In the words are three things considerable.

I. God's qualification of Jeremy to be an overseer in his church; "I will make thee a fenced brazen wall."

Now a wall imports, 1. Enclosure, 203. 2. Fortification, *ib.* This metaphor of a wall, as applied to a church-governor, being explained; to make good that title, he must have, 1. Courage, 204. 2. Innocence and integrity, *ib.* 3. Authority, 205.

II. The opposition that the church-governor thus qualified will be sure to meet with in his office: "They shall fight against thee." And this they are like to do,

1. By seditious preaching and praying, 207.
2. By railing and libels, 207.
3. Perhaps by open force, 208.

III. The issue and success of this opposition: "They shall not prevail against thee."

It is bold to foretell things future, which fall under human cognizance only two ways: 1. By a foresight of them in their causes. 2. By divine revelation. And from both these there is ground of hope to the church, 209.

The arguments against this answered, 1. That the enemies of the church in the late confusion did not prevail against her: for that only is a prevailing,

which is a final conquest. 2. That he who is pillaged or murdered in the resolute performance of his duty, is not properly prevailed against, 210.

Wherefore the governors of the church may with confidence from the text bespeak their opposers; who shall fight against us? it is God that saves. Who shall destroy? it is the same God that delivers.

SERMONS V. VI.

ON THE GOSPEL BEING THE TRUTH AFTER GODLINESS.

TITUS I. 1.

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.

The end of all philosophical inquiries is truth, and of all religious institutions godliness; both which are united and blended in the constitution of Christianity, 212.

I. In this expression of the gospel's being "the truth which is after godliness," three things are couched.

1. That it is simply a truth, 212.

2. That it is an operative truth. And

3. That it operates to the best effect, 213.

The words may have a double sense, 213. 1. That the gospel is so called because it actually produces the effects of godliness in those that embrace it. 2. That it is, in its nature, the most apt and proper instrument of holiness; and the truth, which has thus an influence upon godliness, consists of two things;

1. A right notion of God.

2. A right notion of what concerns the duty of man, 214.

II. Three things are deduced from this description of the gospel, 216.

1. That the nature and prime design of religion is, to be an instrument of good life:

This cleared by these arguments. 1. That religion designs the service of God, by gaining to his obedience man's actions and converse. 2. It designs the salvation of man, who is not saved as he is more knowing, but as he is more pious than others. 3. That the excellency of Christianity does not consist in discovering more sublime truths, or more excellent precepts than philosophy (though it does this), but in suggesting better arguments to enforce the performance of those precepts, than any other religion, 216. 4. That notwithstanding the diversity of religions, men will generally be condemned hereafter for the same things, viz. their breaches of morality, 217.

2. That so much knowledge of truth, as is sufficient to engage men in the practice of godliness, serves the necessary ends of religion. For if godliness be the design, it ought also to be the measure of men's knowledge in this particular, 217.

3. That whatsoever does in itself, or its direct consequences, undermine the motives of a good life, is contrary to and destructive of Christian religion.

The doctrines that more immediately concern a good life are,

I. Such as concern the justification of a sinner, 218.

And herein the motives to holy living are subverted. 1. By the doctrine of the covenant of grace without conditions of performance on man's part, but only to believe that he is justified: taught by the Antinomians, 218. 2. By the doctrine of acceptance with God, by the righteousness and merits of other saints: taught by the Romanists, 219.

II. Such as concern the rule of life and manners.

And here the motives to godliness are destroyed. 1. By that doctrine of the Antinomians, that exempts all believers from the obligation of the moral law, 220. 2. By that doctrine of the church of Rome, which asserts any sin

to be, in its nature, venial, 221. The church of Rome herein resembling the Jewish church corrupted by the pharisees, who distinguished the commandments into the great and the small, 222. 3. By the Romish doctrine of supererogation, 224. 4. By that doctrine that places it in the power of any mere mortal man to dispense with the laws of Christ, so as to discharge any man from being obliged by them, 225.

III. Such as relate to repentance. The doctrine of repentance may be perverted in a double respect:

1. In respect of the time of it: as is done by the Romish casuists, who say, that a man is bound to repent of his sins once, but when that once shall be, he may determine as he thinks fit, 228. 2. As to the measure of it. The Romish doctrine considered in this respect, and refuted, 230.

The improvement of all lies in two things:

1. To convince us how highly it concerns all, but especially the most knowing, to try the doctrines that they believe, and to let inquiry usher in faith, 232.

2. It suggests also the sure marks by which we may try them. As, 1. It is not the pleasingness or suitableness of a doctrine to our tempers or interests; nor, 2. The general or long reception of it; nor, 3. The godliness of the preacher or asserter of any doctrine, that is a sure mark of the truth of it: but if it naturally tends to promote the fear of God in men's hearts, and to engage them in virtuous courses, it carries with it the mark and impress of the great eternal truth, 232.

SERMONS VII. VIII. IX.

ON FLATTERY.

PROVERBS XXIX. 5.

A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

The words being plain, the matter contained in them is prosecuted under three general heads, 235.

I. What flattery is, and wherein it does consist.

Though we cannot reach all the varieties of it, the general ways are,

1. Concealing or dissembling the defects or vices of any person, 236. And here are shown two things:

1st. Who they are that are concerned to speak in this case. Namely, 1. Such as are entrusted with the government of others, 237. 2. Persons set apart to the work of the ministry, *ib.* 3. Those that profess friendship, 238.

2dly. The manner how they are to speak. As, 1. The reproof should be given in secret, 238. 2. With due respect to, and distinction of the condition of the person reproved, 239. 3. With words of meekness and commiseration, 242. 4. That the reproof be not continued or repeated after amendment of the occasion, 244.

2. The second way of flattery, is the praising and defending the defects or vices of any person, 246.

Under this species, the distinction betwen a religious and a political conscience observed, and censured, 247.—And two sorts of men charged as the most detestable flatterers:

1. Such as upon principles of enthusiasm assure persons of eminence and high place, that those transgressions are allowable in them, that are absolutely prohibited and condemned in others, 249.

2. The Romish casuists, who persuade the world that many actions, which have hitherto passed for impious and unlawful, admit of such qualifications as clear them of all guilt, 249.

This kind of flattery is of most mischievous consequence, and of very easy effect. 1. From the nature of man, 250. 2. From the very nature of vice itself, 251.

3. The third kind of flattery is, the perverse imitation of any one's defects or vices, 251.

4. The fourth consists in overvaluing those virtues and perfections, that are really laudable in any person, 253.

II. The grounds and occasions of flattery, on his part that is flattered.

Three mentioned. 1. Greatness of place or condition, 255. 2. An angry, passionate disposition, and impatient of reproof, 256. 3. A proud and vain-glorious disposition, 258.

III. The ends and designs of the flatterer. "He spreads a net for his neighbour's feet." The flatterer is influenced by these two grand purposes;

1. To serve himself, 259.

2. To undermine him whom he flatters, and thereby to effect his ruin, 261. Which he does, 1. As he deceives him, and grossly abuses and perverts his judgment, which should be the guide of all his actions, *ib.* 2. He brings him to shame and a general contempt, 262. 3. He effects his ruin; forasmuch as by this means he renders his recovery and amendment impossible, *ib.*

SERMONS X. XI. XII.

ON THE NATURE OF PRESUMPTUOUS SINS.

PSALM XIX. 13.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.

These words suggest three things to our consideration. 1. The thing prayed against, presumptuous sins. 2. The person making this prayer; one adorned with the highest elogies for his piety, even by God himself. 3. The means he engages for his deliverance; namely, the divine grace and assistance, 264.

The words are discussed under two general heads.

I. Showing what these presumptuous sins are.

II. Showing the reason of this so holy person's praying so earnestly against them.

The first head is handled in three things.

I. Showing in general what it is to presume, 264.

The scripture-description of presumption. Three parts go to make up a presumptuous sin. 1. That a man undertake an action known by him to be unlawful, or at least doubtful. 2. That notwithstanding, he promise to himself security from any punishment of right consequent upon it. 3. That he do this upon motives utterly groundless and unreasonable, 265.

The presumptuous sinner is divested of the two only pleas for the extenuation of sin. As, 1. Ignorance, 266. 2. Surprise, 267.

Distinction between sins of presumption and sins of infirmity.

Three opinions concerning a sin of infirmity, 268. The

1st Derives the nature of it from the condition of the agent; affirming that every sin committed by a believer, or a person truly regenerate, is a sin of infirmity. This doctrine is considered and refuted, 268.

2. Some, from the matter of the action; as that it is committed only in thought or desire, or perhaps in word. To this is answered, 1. That there is no act producible by the soul of man under the power of his will, but it is capable of being a sin of presumption. 2. The voice of God in scripture is loud against this opinion, 269, 270.

3. Some, from the principle immediately producing the action, viz. that the will is carried to the one by malice, to the other by inadvertency, 271.

But for our better conduct is shown, first negatively, what is not a sin of infirmity: as, 1. When a man ventures and designs to commit a sin upon this ground, that he judges it a sin of infirmity. 2. That sin, though in itself never so small, that a man, after the committing of it, is desirous to excuse

or extenuate, 271. 2. Positively what is; namely, a sin committed out of mere sudden inadvertency, that inadvertency not being directly caused by any deliberate sin immediately going before it, 273.

II. Assigning some of the most notable kinds of presumptuous sins, 273. As,

1. Sin against the goodness of God, manifesting itself to a man in great prosperity, 273.

2. Sins committed under God's judging and afflicting hand, 275.

3. Committing a sin clearly discovered and directly pointed at by the word of God, either written or preached, 276.

4. Committing a sin against passages of Providence, particularly threatening the commission of it, 277.

5. Sins against the inward checks and warnings of conscience, 278.

6. Sins against that inward taste, relish, and complacency, that men have found in their attempts to walk with God, 279.

7. The returning to, and repeated commission of the same sin, 280.

III. Proposing some remedies against these sins. As,

1. Let a man endeavour to fix in his heart a deep apprehension and persuasion of the transcendent evil of the nature of sin in general, 283.

2. Let him most seriously consider, and reflect upon God's justice, 285.

3. Let him consider how much such offences would exasperate even men, 286.

Second general head: showing the reason of the psalmist's so earnest praying against these sins, 287.

The prosecution of the first head might be argument enough: but yet for a more full discussion of the point, these further reasons, which might induce him to it, are considered.

1. The danger of falling into these sins. 1. From the nature of man, which is apt to be confident, 287. 2. From the object of presumption, God's mercy, *ib.* 3. From the tempter, who chiefly concerns himself to engage men in this kind of sin, 288.

2. The sad consequences of them if fallen into. Amongst which are, 1. Their marvellous aptness to grow upon him that gives way to them, 289. 2. That of all others they prove the most difficult in their cure, 290. 3. They waste the conscience infinitely more than any other sins, 291. 4. They have always been followed by God with greater and fiercer judgments than any others, *ib.*

SERMON XIII.

THE MOST SECRET ACTIONS KNOWN TO GOD.

PSALM CXXXIX. 3.

Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

The metaphorical expressions in the text being explained, 294, this doctrinal observation is gathered from it; viz.

That God knows, and takes strict and accurate notice of the most secret and retired passages of a man's life; which is proved by reasons of two sorts.

I. Such as prove that it is so, that God knows the most secret passages of our lives, 296.

1. He observes them, because he rules and governs them. Which he does three ways: 1. By discovering them. 2. By preventing of them, 296. 3. By directing them for other ends than those for which they were intended, 297.

2. Because he gives laws to regulate them, 297.

3. Because he will judge them, 298.—First, in this life, wherein he often

gives the sinner a foretaste of what he intends to do in the future, 298. 2. At the day of judgment, 299.

II. Such reasons as show whence it is that God takes such notice of them. He observes all hidden things:

1. From his omniscience, or power of knowing all things, 300.

2. From his intimate presence to the nature and being of all things, 300.

The application of the whole lies in showing the uses it may afford us: which are,

1. A use of conviction, to convince all presumptuous sinners of the atheism of their hearts, 301.

2nd use. It speaks terror to all secret sinners, 302. Now secret sins are of wo sorts, both of which God perfectly knows. As,

1. The sins of our thoughts and desires, 303. And he will judge of men by these, 1. Because they are most spiritual, and consequently most opposite to the nature of God, *ib.* 2. Because man's actions and practice may be overruled, but thoughts and desires are the natural and genuine offspring of the soul, 304.

2. Such sins, as are not only transacted in the mind, but also by the body, yet are covered from the view of men, 306.

3. As God's omniscience is a terror to secret sinners, so it speaks no less comfort to all sincere-hearted Christians, 306.

SERMON XIV.

DISCONTENT WITH THE PRESENT UNREASONABLE.

ECCLES. VII. 10.

Say not thou, What is the cause that former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.

In the days of Solomon, when Jerusalem was the glory of the whole earth, these complaints of the times were made; and yet a little backward in the calendar, we have nothing but tumults, changes, and vicissitudes, 308.

The words run in the form of a question, yet include a positive assertion, and a downright censure. The inquiry being determined before it was proposed, now the charge of folly, here laid upon it, may relate to the supposition upon which it is founded, in a threefold respect; viz.

I. Of a peremptory negation, as a thing absolutely to be denied, that former times are better than the following.

II. As of a case very disputable, whether they are so or no.

III. As admitting the supposition for true, that they are better. In every one of which respects this inquiry ought to be exploded. And,

I. That it is ridiculous to ask why former times are better than the present, if they really are not so, 309. And that they are not, is evinced, 1. From reason, 310. 2. From history and the records of antiquity, *ib.*

II. Supposing the case disputable: which being argued, 1. On the side of antiquity, 312. 2. Of succeeding times, 313. This inquiry is shown to be unreasonable, 1. In respect of the nature of the thing itself. 2. In respect of the incompetence of any man living to judge in this controversy, 314.

III. Supposing it true, that former times are really best, this querulous reflection is foolish,

1. Because such complaints have no efficacy to alter or remove the cause of them, 314.

2. Because they only quicken the smart, and add to the pressure, 315.

3. Because the just cause of them is resolvable into ourselves, 316.

SERMON XV.

ON THE DANGER OF DEFFERING REPENTANCE.

MATTHEW v. 25, 26.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

In these words Christ enforces the duty of an amicable concord and agreement betwixt brethren, from the unavoidable misery of those obstinate wretches that persist in and perpetuate an injury, 318.

Some understand the words in a literal, some in a figurative sense, 318.

The several terms therein explained in the spiritual sense of them; according to which, by the word "adversary" is meant the divine law, or a man's own conscience, as commissionated by that law.—By "the way," the time of this life, or rather the present opportunities of repentance.—By "judge," the great God of heaven.—By "officer," the devil.—By "prison," hell.—By "paying the utmost farthing," the guilty person's being dealt with according to the utmost rigour and extremity of justice, 319, 320.

The text is parabolical, and includes both senses. For the better understanding which, a parable is explained to contain two parts. (1.) The material, literal part, contained in the bare words. (2.) The formal, spiritual part, or application of the parable; which is sometimes expressed, and sometimes understood, as in this place, 320.

The sense of the text is presented under three conclusions:

1. That the time of this life is the only time for a sinner to make his peace with God.

2. That this consideration ought to be a prevailing, unanswerable argument to engage and quicken his repentance.

3. That if a sinner lets this pass, he irrecoverably falls into an estate of utter perdition, 321.

The second conclusion, the subject of this discourse, the truth whereof made appear three ways.

I. By comparing the shortness of life with the difficulty of this work of repentance, 321.

The difficulty of repentance appears,

1. Because a man is to clear himself of an injury done to an infinite offended justice, to appease an infinite wrath and an infinite provoked majesty, 323.

2. Because a man is utterly unable of himself to give God any thing by way of just compensation or satisfaction, 324.

II. By comparing the uncertainty of life with the necessity of the work, 325.

III. By considering the sad and fatal doom that will infallibly attend the neglect of it, 327.

The misery and terror of this doom consists in two things: 1. That it cannot be avoided, 328. 2. That it cannot be revoked, *ib.*

Application in urging over the same duty from another argument, namely, that so long as there is enjoyment of a temporal life, there may be just hope of an eternal. Therefore "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the way," 330.

SERMON XVI.

ON THE LOVE OF HUMAN APPLAUSE AS A MOTIVE TO VIRTUE.

MATTHEW XXIII. 5.

But all their works they do for to be seen of men.

THIS notable instance of religious ostentation in the Pharisees, leads to an inquiry, how far the love of glory is able to engage men in a virtuous and religious life, 331.

I. A love of glory is sufficient to produce all those virtuous actions that are visible in the lives of those that profess religion: because,

1. It has done so: this shown from the examples of the noblest and most virtuous of the heathens; from the abstinence of the ancient athletics; from the character of the ancient pharisees; and from that of many modern Christians, 331—333.

2. There is nothing visible in the very best actions, but what may proceed from the most depraved principles, if acted by prudence, caution, and design, 334.

II. The reasons, whence this affection comes to have such an influence upon our actions, are these:

1. Because glory is the proper pleasure of the mind; it being the complacency that a man finds within himself arising from his conceit of the opinion that another has of some excellency or perfection in him, 335.

2. Because it is founded in the innate desire of superiority and greatness, that is in every man, 336.

3. Because a fair reputation opens a man's way to all the advantages of life: as in the times of the rebellion, when the face of a dissembled piety gave men great credit and authority with the generality, 337.

III. This principle is insufficient to engage mankind in virtuous actions, without the assistance of religion. Two considerations premised, viz.

1. That virtue and a good life determines not in outward practices, but respects the most inward actions of the mind, 339.

2. That the principle of honour or glory governs a man's actions entirely by the judgment and opinion of the world concerning them, 339.

These considerations premised, the principle of honour appears to be utterly insufficient to engage and argue men into the practice of virtue, in the following cases:

1. When by ill customs and worse discourses, any vice (as fornication, theft, self-murder, &c.) comes to have a reputation, or at least no disreputation, in the judgment of a nation; the shame God has annexed to sin, being in a great measure taken from it by fashion, 340.

2. When a man can pursue his vice secretly and indiscernibly: as, first, when he entertains it in his thoughts, affections, and desires; secondly, when, though it passes from desire into practice, yet it is acted with such circumstances of external concealment, that it is out of the notice and arbitration of all observers, 342.

If then honour be the strongest motive nature has to enforce virtue by, and this is found insufficient for so great a purpose, it is vain to attempt such a superstructure upon any weaker foundation, 343.

IV. Even those actions that a principle of honour does produce, are of no value in the sight of God, and that upon the account of a double defect:

1. In respect of the cause from which they flow; inasmuch as they proceed only upon the apprehension of a present interest, which when it ceases, the fountain of such actions is dried up, 344.

2. In respect of the end to which they are directed; which end is self, not the glory of God, 345.

In both these respects, the most sublime moral performances of the heathens were defective, and therefore have been always arraigned and condemned by Christian divinity, 345.

Two things inferred, by way of corollary and conclusion:

1. The worth and absolute necessity of religion in the world, even as to the advantage of civil society; and the mischievous tendency of atheistical principles, 345.

2. The inexcusableness of those persons, who, professing religion, yet live below a principle inferior to religion, 346.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

2 Cor. i. 24.

For by faith ye stand.

Faith more usually discoursed of by divines, than explained, 348. Three sorts of faith mentioned in scripture. 1. A faith of simple credence, or bare assent. 2. A temporary faith, and a faith of conviction. 3. A saving, effectual faith (which here only is intended) wrought in the soul by a sound and real work of conversion, *ib.*

Two things considerable in the words.

I. Something supposed, viz. that believers will be encountered and assaulted in their spiritual course, 349. In every spiritual combat are to be considered,

1. The persons engaged in it, 349: which are believers on the one side, and the devil on the other.

2. The thing contended for by it, 350. This assault of the devil intended to cast believers down from their purity and sanctity of life, *ib.*, and from their interest in the divine favour, 351.

3. The means by which it is carried on, 352. The devil's own immediate suggestions, *ib.* The devil assaults a man by the infidelity of his own heart, *ib.*, by the alluring vanities of the world, 353, and by the help of man's own lusts and corruptions, 354.

II. Something expressed; viz. that it is faith alone, that in such encounters does or can make them victorious, 355. For making out which, is shown,

1. How deplorably weak and insufficient man is, while considered in his natural estate, and void of the grace of faith, 355.

2. The advantages and helps faith gives believers for the conquest of their spiritual enemy, 357. It gives them a real union with Christ, *ib.* It engages the assistance of the Spirit on their behalf, 358. And lastly, gives them both a title to, and a power effectually to apply, God's promises through Christ, who is the "rock of ages," the only sure station for poor sinners, and able to save to the uttermost all those that by faith rely upon him, 359.

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE MERCY OF GOD.

Psalm cxlv. 9.

The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

Mercy, as it is ascribed to God, may be considered two ways, 361.

I. For the principle itself.

II. For the effects and actions flowing from that principle, which, in the sense of the text, are such as are general and diffusive to all, 361.

The words are prosecuted by setting forth God's general mercy and goodness to the creature in a survey of the state and condition,

1. Of the inanimate part of the creation, 362.

2. Of plants and vegetables, 362.

3. Of the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, 364

4. Of man, 364.

5. Of angels: in respect of their nature, 366; of their place of habitation, 367, and of their employment, *ib.*

A deduction from the precedent discourse, to settle in the mind right thoughts of God's natural goodness to men, 367, with arguments against the hard thoughts men usually have of God, drawn from two qualities that do always attend them, 369.

1. Their unreasonableness, 369.

2. Their danger, 370.

SERMON XIX.

THE DEPRAVITY OF THE WILL THE CAUSE OF SIN.

JAMES I. 14.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

The explication of these two terms being premised, 1. What the apostle means here by being tempted. 2. What is intended by lust, 372 ;

The prosecution of the words lies in these particulars :

I. To show the false causes upon which men are apt to charge their sins. And that,

1. The decree of God concerning things to come to pass, is not a proper cause for any man to charge his sins upon, 373. Objection to this stated, and answered, 373, 374.

2. The influences of the heavens and of the stars imprint nothing upon men that can impel or engage them to do evil, 375.

3. Neither can any man charge his sins upon the constitution and temper of his body, as the proper cause of them, 376.

4. No man can justly charge his sins upon the devil, as the cause of them, 377.

Though these be not the proper causes of sin, they are observed to be very often great promoters of it, where they meet with a corrupt heart, 378.

II. To show that the proper cause of sin is the depraved will of man ; which being supposed sufficiently clear from scripture, is further evinced by arguments and reasons.

1. From the office of the will.

2. From every man's experience of himself and his own actions.

3. From the same man's making a different choice of the same object at one time, from what he does at another.

4. From this, that even the souls in hell continue to sin, 379.

III. To show the way by which a corrupt will is the cause of sin. And,

1. It draws a man aside from the ways of duty, 380.

2. Entices him, by representing the pleasure of sin, stripped of all the troubles and inconveniences of sin, 381, and by representing that pleasure that is in sin greater than indeed it is, 382. But

The exceeding vanity of every sinful pleasure is made to appear by considering,

1. The latitude or measure of its extent.

2. The duration or continuance of it, 382.

SERMON XX.

ON MAN'S FORFEITURE OF THE LOVE OF HIS CREATOR.

ISAIAH XXVII. 11.

For it is a people of no understanding : therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.

The prophet, after eloquently describing a severe judgment to be inflicted on the Jews in the deplorable destruction of Jerusalem, 384, does in the next words assign a reason for it : "For it is a people of no understanding." This ignorance is here explained to be not that of an empty understanding, but of a depraved heart and corrupt disposition, and therefore the highest aggravation, 385.

From the words of the text are deduced two observations :

I. The relation of a Creator strongly engages God to put forth acts of love and favour towards his creature, 386. The strength of which oblige-

ment appears, 1. Because it is natural. 2. Because God put it upon himself, *ib.*

There are three engaging things, implied in the creature's relation to God, that oblige him to manifest himself in a way of goodness to it.

1. The extract or original of the creature's being, which is from God himself, 386, which includes in it two other endearing considerations. (1.) It puts a likeness between God and the creature. (2.) Whatsoever comes from God, by way of creation, is good, and so there naturally does result an act of love, 387.

2. The dependence of its being upon God, 388.

3. The end of the creature's being is God's glory, 388.

II. How sin disengages and takes off God from all those acts of favour, that the relation of a Creator engaged him to, 389.

1. It turns that which, in itself, is an obligation of mercy, to be an aggravation of the offence, 389.

2. It takes away that similitude that is between God and the creature, which (as has been observed) was one cause of that love, 390.

3. It takes off the creature from his dependence upon God; that is, his moral dependence, which is a filial reliance and recumbency upon him, 391.

4. It renders the creature useless, as to the end for which it was designed, 392.

In an application of the foregoing, the first use is to obviate and take off that common argument, in the mouths of the ignorant, and in the hearts of the knowing, that God would never make them to destroy them; and therefore, since he has made them, they roundly conclude that he will not destroy them, 393.

Now the reasons upon which men found their objections may be these two;

1. A self-love, and a proneness to conceive some extraordinary perfection in themselves, which may compound for their misdemeanors, 394.

2. Their readiness to think that God is not so exceeding jealous of his honour, but he may easily put up the breach of it, without the ruin of his creature, 395.

These pleas and objections of men answered by considering and comparing the offence of a child against his natural parent, with that of a creature against his Creator, 396.

The second use is to inform us of the cursed provoking nature of sin, 397. And,

The third use may show us under what notion we are to make our addresses to God; not as a Creator, but a reconciled God, 398.

SERMON XXI.

THE REMORSE OCCASIONED BY THE REJECTION OF CHRIST.

MATT. XIX. 22.

When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

After reflecting upon the command, that gave occasion to this sorrow, under these three degrees; 1. "Go, sell that thou hast." 2. "Give to the poor." 3. "Come and follow me," 400. And likewise stating and answering some abuses in the doctrine of the papists concerning this scripture, 401. The words of the text are observed to contain in them four things considerable.

1. The person making the address to Christ, who was one whose reason was enlightened to a solicitous consideration of his estate in another world.

2. The thing sought for in this address, viz. eternal life.

3. The condition upon which it was proposed, and upon which it was refused; namely, the sale and relinquishment of his temporal estate.

4. His behaviour upon this refusal. "He departed sorrowful," 402.

Which are all joined together in this one proposition, viz.

He that deliberately parts with Christ, though for the greatest and most suitable worldly enjoyment, if but his natural reason is awakened, does it with much secret sting and remorse, 402. In the prosecution of this is shown,

I. Whence it is, that a man, acted by an enlightened reason, finds such reluctancy and regret upon his rejection of Christ: it may proceed from these causes:

1. From the nature of conscience, that is apt to recoil upon any error, either in our actions or in our choice, 403.

2. From the usual course of God's judicial proceeding in this matter, which is to clarify the eye of reason to a clearer sight of the beauties and excellencies of Christ, in the very moment and critical instant of his departure, 404.

3. Because there is that in Christ and in the gospel, even as they stand in opposition to the best of such enjoyments, that answers the most natural and generous discourses of reason, 404. For proof hereof, two known principles of reason produced, into which the most severe commands of the gospel are resolved;

(1.) That the greatest calamity is to be endured, rather than the least sin to be committed, 405.

(2.) That a less good is to be forsaken for a greater, 406. To reduce this principle to the case in hand, two things are demonstrated. 1st. That the good promised by our Saviour to the young man was really greater than that which was to be forsaken for it. 2dly. That it was proposed as such with sufficient clearness of evidence, and upon sure, undeniable grounds.

Here, to omit other arguments, the truth of the gospel seems chiefly to be proved upon these two grounds:

1. The exact fulfilling of prophecies in the person of Christ.

2. His miraculous actions; the convincing strength of which is undeniable upon these two most confessed principles. (1.) That they did exceed any natural created power, and therefore were the immediate effects of a divine. (2.) That God cannot attest, or by his power bear witness to a lie, 408.

II. The causes are shown why, notwithstanding this regret, the soul is yet brought in the issue to reject Christ.

1. The perceptions of sense overbear the discourse of reason, 410.

2. The prevailing opposition of some corrupt affection, 411.

3. The force and tyranny of the custom of the world, 412.

Now the inferences and deductions from the words thus discussed are these:

1. We gather hence the great criterion and art of trying our sincerity, 413.

2. That misery which attends a final dereliction of Christ; whereby a man loses all his happiness. (1.) That which is eternal, 415. And, (2.) even that which is temporal also, 416. Now we may conclude, that unbelief is entertained upon very hard terms, when it not only condemns a man to die, but also, as it were, feeds him with bread and water till his execution; and so leaves him wretched and destitute, even in that place where the wicked themselves have an inheritance, *ib.*

SERMON XXII.

THE DUTY OF PATIENCE UNDER INJURIES.

1 Peter ii. 23.

Who, being reviled, reviled not again.

A Christian's duty is fully comprised in his active and his passive obedience. Christ's example shows, that he was not only able to do, but also to suffer miracles: and all his actions are usually reduced to three sorts. 1. His miraculous. 2. His mediatorial. 3. His moral actions; which last he both did himself, and also commanded others to do: wherefore it is our

positive duty to imitate this particular instance of Christ's patience, 417, 418.

The words are discussed in three particulars.

1. Showing what is implied in the extent of this duty of "not reviling again." It implies two things.

1. A suppressing of our inward disgusts, 419.

2. A restraint of our outward expressions, 420.

A caution given for our regulation in this duty, that a due asperity of expression against the enemies of God, the king, and the public, is not the reviling in the text, the scene of which is properly private revenge, 420, 421.

II. In showing how the observation of this duty comes to be so exceeding difficult.

It is so, 1. From the peculiar provoking quality of ill language, 422. 2. Because nature has deeply planted in every man a strange tenderness for his good name, which, in the rank of worldly enjoyments, the wisest of men has placed before life itself, 423.

III. In showing by what means a man may work himself to such a composure and temper of spirit, to observe this excellent duty. Nothing less than God's grace can subdue the heart to such a frame; but we may add our endeavours, by frequently and seriously reflecting, that to return railing for railing is utterly useless to all rational intents and purposes, 424. This is made appear inductively, by recounting the several ends and intents to which, with any colour of reason, it may be designed.

1. The first reason should be to remove the cause of the provocation received, 425. 2. The second may be by this means to confute the calumny, and to discredit the truth of it, *ib.* 3. To take a full and proper revenge of him that first reviled, 426. 4. To manifest a generous greatness of spirit, in showing impatience of an affront, 427.

By severally unravelling of which is shown, how unfit reviling again is to reach or effect any of them. And St. Paul writes, "If any one that is called a brother be an extortioner or a railer, not to keep company with such a one, no, not to eat;" but especially at the Lord's table: and he that is thus excommunicated and excluded the company of the saints in this world, is not like to be thought fit for the society of angels in the next, 427.

SERMON XXIII.

ON THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S ANGER.

PSALM XC. 11.

Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

This description of God's anger is supposed to come from Moses, who might well be sensible of its weight, 428.

Anger and the like affections cannot properly be said to be in the infinitely perfect God at all; but is only an extrinsical denomination of a work wrought without him, when he does something that bears a similitude to those effects that anger produces in men, 428.

The prosecution of the words is managed in four particulars.

I. Two preparatory observations are laid down concerning God's anger.

1. That every harsh and severe dispensation is not an effect of it, 429. 2. That there is a great difference between God's anger and his hatred, 430.

II. Those instances are shown in which this insupportable anger of God does exercise and exert itself.

1. It inflicts immediate blows and rebukes upon the conscience, 431.

2. It embitters afflictions, 432.

3. It curses enjoyments, 433.

III. Those properties and qualifications are considered, which set forth and declare the extraordinary greatness of it.

1. It is fully commensurate to the very utmost of our fears, 434.

2. It not only equals, but infinitely transcends our fears, 435.

3. Though we may attempt it in our thoughts, yet we cannot bring it within the comprehension of our knowledge, 436.

4. The greatness of God's anger appears, by comparing it with that of men, 437.

IV. Some use and improvement made of the whole. As,

1. It may serve to discover to us the intolerable misery of such as labour under a lively sense of God's wrath for sin, 437.

2. It may discover to us the ineffable vastness of Christ's love to mankind in his sufferings for them, 438.

3. It speaks terror to such as can be quiet, and at peace within themselves, after the commission of great sins, 439.

4. All that has been said of God's anger, is a warning against sin, that cursed thing which provokes it. Therefore men are advised to begin here, and not expect to extinguish the flame till they withdraw the fuel. Let them but do this, and God will not fail to do the other, 440.

SERMON XXIV.

GOD TO BE FEARED RATHER THAN MAN.

MATTHEW X. 28.

Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

Christ in this chapter is commissioning his twelve apostles for their evangelical expedition: from the fifth verse almost to the end of the chapter we have an explication of their commission. 1. In respect of the place where they were to administer it. 2. In respect of the doctrine they were to preach, 441.

Christ's instructions are reducible to these two. (1.) A caution against the luxury of the world, 441. (2.) An encouragement against the cruelty of the world, 442.

And to make his admonitions more effectual, he descends to those particular things he knew they chiefly feared. 1. Bodily torments. 2. Disgrace. 3. Death, 443.

Which last he cautions them against for these three reasons. (1.) Because it is but the death of the body. (2.) Because hell is more to be feared. (3). Because they live under the special care of God's overseeing providence; and therefore cannot be taken away without his special permission, 444.

An objection concerning the fear of men stated, and answered, 444.

These things premised, the words of the text are pregnant with many great concerning truths. As, 1. That it is within the power of man to divest us of all our temporal enjoyments. 2. That the soul of man is immortal. 3. That God has an absolute and plenary power to destroy the whole man. 4. That the thought of damnation ought to have greater weight to engage our fears, than the most exquisite miseries that the power or malice of man is able to inflict, 445. The prosecution of this lies in two things:

I. In showing what is in these miseries which men are able to inflict, that may lessen our fears of them. Seven considerations ought to lessen our fears of those miseries.

1. That they are temporal, and concern only this life: as, 1. Loss of reputation. 2. Loss of an estate. Or, 3. Loss of life, which of itself is quickly past, 446.

2. They do not take away any thing from a man's proper perfections, 447.

3. They are all limited by God's overruling hand, 448.

4. The good that may be extracted out of such miseries as are inflicted by men, is often greater than the evil that is endured by them, 449.

5. The fear of these evils seldom prevents them before they come, and never lessens them when they are come, 449.

6. The all-knowing God, who knows the utmost of them better than men or angels, has pronounced them not to be feared, 450.

7. The greatest of these evils have been endured, and that without fear or astonishment, 451.

II. In showing what is implied in the destruction of the body and soul in hell, which makes it so formidable, 452.

After running over several common considerations, this gives a sting to all the rest, that it is the utmost the almighty God can do to a sinner, 453.

Some objections about total annihilation and diminution of being here answered, 454.

Application in exhorting us, whenever we are discouraged from duty or tempted to sin by man, on one side conscientiously to ponder man's inability, and on the other God's infinite power, to destroy. The power of the latter consideration instanced in the case of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego; of Joseph; and the apostles' perseverance in preaching; and the neglect of the former consideration, in the case of Saul and Amalek; David's madness, and Peter's denial of Christ, 455—457.

2nd Use. That it is not absurd to give cautions for the avoiding eternal death, even to those whose salvation is sure, and sealed up in the purpose of God, 457.

3rd Use. This speaks reproof to that slavish sort of sinners who are men-pleasers. Flattery of men always carries with it a distrust or a neglect of God: it is ignoble, as a man; and irreligious, as a Christian, 458.

SERMON XXV.

ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

HEBREWS II. 16.

For verily he took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

The dark and miserable ignorance considered, that had overspread almost all the world for four thousand years before the coming of Christ, who was born to be the great mediator and instructor of mankind, which he was to do by the strongest methods, and most miraculous condescensions to our likeness, 460.

A critical exposition of the words to vindicate the translation of the text, 461, which is prosecuted in two particulars.

I. In showing what is naturally inferred from Christ's "taking on him the seed of Abraham." Four things follow and are inferred upon it.

1. The divine nature of Christ is unavoidably consequent from hence, 463.

2. The reality of Christ's human nature, 463.

3. The truth of his office, and the divinity of his mission is deducible from the same ground, 465.

4. Christ's voluntary choice and design, to assume a condition here upon earth low and contemptible, 465.

II. In showing why Christ took upon him the nature of man, and not of angels. The reasons whereof (besides that it was the divine will, which is a very sufficient one, 467) may be these two.

1. The transcendent greatness and the malignity of the sin of the angels, above that of men; (1.) As being committed against much greater light. (2.) As commenced upon a greater liberty of will and freedom of choice, 467, 468.

Without such a Redeemer the whole race and species of mankind had perished, as being all involved in the sin of their representative; whereas though many of the angels sinned, yet as many, if not more, persisted in their innocence, 468.

We are exhorted to a return of gratitude, and to a remembrance that Christ made himself "the Son of man," that, by the change of our nature, we might become the sons of God, 469, 470.

SERMON XXVI.

THE FALSE CAUSES TO WHICH MEN ARE APT TO REFER GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

JOHN IX. 2, 3.

And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

The circumstance of this blindness, thus expressed in the words of the first verse, was the occasion of those words that follow in the two next, in which we have,

1. A question of Christ's disciples. The design of the proposal may be twofold. (1.) Simply and positively as their opinion, really judging all maladies of the body to come from the antecedent demerit of sin, as past and actually committed, or as future and foreknown by God. (2.) Only for argument sake, 471, 472.

2. The answer, or rejoinder of Christ, in which, by a reprehensive shortness, he both clears the man's innocence and vindicates God's proceedings, 473.

The words, thus cleared, briefly exhibit to us the erroneous curiosity of the disciples, in their inquiry into the reason of God's judgments, and the state of another man's soul. The design of them is prosecuted in three propositions.

I. That men are prone to charge God's judgments upon false causes, 474. And,

1. These causes are shown; which are (1.) Sin on his part that suffers, 475. (2.) Hatred on God's part, 476.

2. The principles are shown, inducing men to make such false references: and these are, (1.) The fallibility of the rule, and the falseness of the opinion by which they judge, 477. (2.) Their inability in discerning, joined with their confidence in pronouncing, 478. (3.) The inbred malice of our nature, 479.

II. That not always the sin or merit of the person afflicted, but the will of God, that afflicts, is sometimes the sole, but always the sufficient reason of the affliction, 480.

In support of which, God's own testimony, Job xlii. 7, is produced; a distinction is made between punishments and afflictions, 481, and God's proceeding herein cleared from injustice, upon these reasons. 1. His absolute, unaccountable dominion and sovereignty over the creature, *ib.* 2. The essential equity of his nature, 482. 3. His unerring, all-disposing wisdom, 483.

III. God never inflicts evil upon men, but for the great end of advancing his own glory, and that usually in the way of their good, 484.

This is sufficiently clear in the present instance, and expressed in those words of the text, "That the works of God might be made manifest in him." The works, that God intends thus to glorify, usually are, 1. The miraculous works of his power, 485. 2. The works of his grace, 486.

The use and improvement of the doctrine thus discussed, is a confutation and reproof of the bold, uncharitable interpreters of God's providences; whose peremptory way of judging is peculiarly odious to him for the cursed cause of it, curiosity, which may be properly accounted the incontinence of the mind, and is but one remove from the rebellion of it, 489.

SERMON XXVII.

THE DESIGN WHICH GOD HAS IN FORGIVING SIN.

PSALM CXXX. 4.

But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared?

After man had once sinned, and so was for ever disabled to stand before God upon terms of the law, which spoke nothing but irrevocable death to him who transgressed in the least iota; had God continued this inexorable sentence, it would of necessity have wrought in man these two things.

1. Horror of despair, 490.
2. Height of malice, 491.

God therefore assumes to himself the most endearing description in these words; which consist of two parts, 492.

1. A declaration of mercy, in these words, "There is forgiveness with thee;" and the greatness of it is displayed in the consideration of three things.

1. The principle from which it flows. It is from the free, spontaneous motion of God's good pleasure, 492. This evinced by sundry reasons, 493; his mercy shown to be consistent with his justice, 494; and the former to be made glorious, (1.) In the relaxation of the law, which required of every sinner a satisfaction in his own person, *ib.* (2.) That, as he was pleased to be satisfied with a surety, so he himself found and provided this surety, 495.

2. The sins that are the subject-matter of it; and the greatness of the pardon advances upon considering them, as they are heightened by these two properties; 1. Their number, 496. 2. Their greatness, 498.

3. The persons on whom this pardon is conferred: who are men; that is, worthless and inconsiderable creatures, in comparison of those to whom the same pardon is denied, 499.

II. The end and design of such a declaration, which is fear and obedience; under which head are shown, 500,

1. What that fear is, which is here intended. Now there are three sorts of fear. 1. An anxious, distracting, amazing fear; such as Moses felt upon the sight of God, 500. 2. A slavish and servile fear; such a one as is called "the spirit of bondage," 501. 3. A filial, reverential fear; such a one as is enlivened with a principle of love; which is that alone that is designed in these words, *ib.*

2. How God's forgiveness may be an argument to enforce this fear. As (1.) because the neglect of the fear of God, upon supposal that he has forgiven us our sins, is highly disingenuous. (2.) Also most provoking and dangerous, 502.

Hence we learn, 1. The different nature of Christ's spiritual kingdom from all other kingdoms in the world, in respect of the fear of the subject, 503. 2. Upon what ground every man is to build the persuasion of the pardon of his sins; namely, the effects this persuasion of God's mercy works upon their spirits: for he, that from God's mercy gathers no arguments for his fear, may conclude thus much, that there is indeed forgiveness with God, but no forgiveness for him, 504.

SERMON XXVIII.

A PERCEIVING HEART THE GIFT OF GOD.

[Preached just after Cromwell's death.]

DEUT. XXIX. 4.

Yet the Lord has not given you an heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear unto this day.

God's miraculous favours to the children of Israel are shortly enumerated, and their invincible hardness, strange unbelief, and frequent rebellion under them. An interchange of mercies on God's part and murmurings on theirs being the continual custom and manner of their whole life, Moses might well

accompany the repetition of the covenant with this upbraiding reprehension, 505.

From the several phrases of the same signification in the text, we may collect the exceeding stupidity and total ignorance of the Jews, in apprehending the divine dispensations—or refer them to those several means, which God suited to every apprehensive faculty of their soul, that he might force his convictions upon them, 506, 507.

The words afford us these observations.

1st *Observ.* That the heart may remain unaffected and unconvinced in the midst of convincing means; so termed, (1.) Because they do actually convince some, though they miscarry in others. (2.) Because they have a fitness or aptitude to convince all, 507.

2nd *Observ.* That a perceiving heart is totally and entirely the free gift of God: free, 1. In respect of the motive; 2. In respect of the persons on whom it is conferred, 507.

3rd *Observ.* That God's denial of such a perceiving heart does certainly infer (but not cause) the unsuccessfulness of all the means of grace, 508. In handling of which is shown,

1. What is meant by God's giving to the soul a perceiving heart; which is here set out by such acts as are properly acts of knowledge, as understanding, seeing, hearing; not because grace is placed only in the understanding, as some imagine; but, 1. Because the understanding has the precedency and first stroke in holy actions, as well as others. 2. Because the means of grace are most frequently expressed by the word of truth, and the understanding is that faculty, whose proper office it is to close in with truth as such, 508.

To have a perceiving heart is not, 1. To understand and receive the word, according to the letter and notion, by a bare assent to the truth of it, 509. But, 2. To have a light begot in the mind, by an immediate work of the Spirit, whereby alone the soul is enabled to apprehend and discern the things of God spiritually, and to practise them effectually,

II. Whence it is, that without this gift the soul cannot make any improvement of the means of grace. It arises from two reasons:

1. From its exceeding impotence and inability to apprehend these things, 511:

2. From its contrariety to them, which chiefly consists, (1.) In carnal corruptions, 513. (2.) In carnal wisdom, 514.

III. That although upon God's denial of a perceiving heart, the soul remain unprofitable under the means of grace, so as not to hear, nor perceive; yet this unprofitableness cannot at all be ascribed to God as the chief author of it, 515.

God's denial of a perceiving heart admits of a double acceptation.

1. It implies only a bare denial of grace. Now it is not this denial that causes us to reject the means of grace, but the immediate sinfulness of the heart, 515.

2. It includes also a positive act of induration. Now God, without begetting any evil disposition in the heart, may harden it to sin; (1.) By affording a general influence or concurrence to the persuasions or suggestions of Satan, or sinful men, so far as they are natural acts, 516. (2.) By disposing and offering such objects and occasions, which, though good in themselves, yet concurring with a corrupt heart, have a fitness to educe that corruption into act, 517. (3.) By affording his concurrence to those motions that such objects and occasions stir up in the soul, so far as they are positive and natural, *ib.*

IV. How God can justly reprehend men for not hearing nor perceiving, when, upon his denial of a heart, there is a necessity lying upon them to do neither, 517.

For clearing this, it is already shown, that God's denial of a heart is not the cause of the necessity of the soul's not perceiving, but its own native hardness. Now this hardness is the immediate product of the sin of Adam,

which was most free and voluntary; and every man is as really guilty of this sin, as he was really represented in Adam, 518.

Application. Use 1. This doctrine speaks refutation to that opinion, that states a sufficiency of grace in the bare proposal of things to be believed and practised, 518.

Use 2, is of exhortation; that in the enjoyment of the means of grace, we should not terminate in the means, but look up to God, who alone is able to give a heart to improve them, 520.

SERMON XXIX.

ON THE PERSON AND OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

[Preached May 29.]

JOHN xv. 26.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

These words contain two general parts.

I. The promise of sending the Spirit: wherein we have a full description of him,

1. In respect of his person; he is said to "proceed from the Father." There has been great controversy between the Latin and Greek churches concerning his procession: the former holding that he proceeds equally from the Father and the Son; and the latter, that he proceeds from the Father only by the Son, 521.

2. In respect of his office or employment, in these two things. (1.) That he is a Comforter, 522. (2.) That he is the Spirit of truth, 524.

He is a Comforter, because he is the Spirit of truth: and truth has this comforting influence upon the mind, 1. From the native congenial suitableness that it has to man's understanding, 524. 2. From the sovereign virtue it has to clear the conscience; (1.) From guilt, 525. (2.) From doubt, 526.

II. The end of his being sent, which was to testify of Christ.

In which are considered,

1. What the Spirit was to testify of Christ; which was, that he was the Son of God, the Messias, and Saviour of the world, 526.

2. By what ways and means he was to testify this of him; which were the gifts conferred by him upon the disciples; three of which seem more eminently designed for the great purpose of preaching the gospel. (1.) The gift of miracles. (2.) The gift of tongues. (3.) That strange, undaunted, and supernatural courage he infused into the disciples, 527.

A full reflection upon what has been said, will furnish an infallible rule for trying men's pretences of the Spirit. If they find not only comment, but text also, and plead the spirit in defiance of the letter; it is not God's Spirit that acts them, but the spirit of darkness and desolation, that ruins government and subverts kingdoms. But thankfully and forgetfully to accept our oppression, the king's restoration is commemorated as the work of the Holy Ghost, carrying in it such bright testimonies of a supernatural power, so much above, nay against the means and actors visibly appearing in it, that it may properly be expressed in those words, Zech. iv. 6, "Not by might, nor by strength; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," 528, 529.

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Now though the chief subject of the text was the Holy Spirit, yet it seems to point both at the Pentecost and the Trinity; for in the words we have, 1. The person sent, which was the Holy Ghost. 2. The person sending him, which was the Son. 3. The person from whom he is said to proceed, which was the Father. All employed in man's salvation; the Father contriving, the Son ordering, and the Spirit performing, 530.

From the whole passage may be collected two things:

1. God's gracious love and condescension to man, 530.
2. The worth of souls: the salvation of which is never left to chance; all the persons of the Trinity being solicitous to comfort them in this world, and at length to waft them to a better, 531.

SERMON XXX.

THE BURDEN OF A WOUNDED SPIRIT.

PROV. XIV. 18.

But a wounded spirit who can bear?

Few men being kept from sin, but merely by the check of their fears, representing to them the endless insupportable torments of another world, as the certain, consequent, and terrible reward of it. Atheists, who shake these fears off, are admonished that God can antedate the torments they disbelieve; and, by what can make them feel, teach them the certainty of what they refuse to fear, 532.

By way of explanation of the words is premised, 1. That by "spirit" is meant the soul, in which there is a lower or inferior part, the sensitive faculties and appetites; and a more noble portion, purely intellectual, in operation, as well as in substance, perfectly spiritual. 2. By being "wounded" is to be understood, its being deeply and intimately possessed with a lively sense of God's wrath for sin, 533.

The sense of the word then lies full and clear in this one proposition, viz. That the trouble and anguish of a soul, labouring under a sense of God's displeasure for sin, is inexpressibly greater than any other grief or trouble whatsoever, 534, which is prosecuted under the following particulars: showing,

I. What kind of persons are the proper subjects of this trouble, viz., both the righteous and the wicked, but with a very different issue, 534,

II. Wherein the excessive greatness of this trouble doth appear; which may be collected, 1. From the behaviour of our Saviour himself in this condition, 534. 2. From those raised and passionate expressions, that have been uttered by persons eminent in the ways of God, while they were labouring under it, 537. 3. From the uninterrupted, incessant continuance of it, 529. 4. From its violent and more than ordinary manifestation of itself, in outward signs and effects, 540. 5. From those horrid effects it has had upon persons not upheld under it by divine grace, 541.

III. By what ways and means this trouble is brought upon the soul; four ways instanced, 1. By dreadful reflections upon divine justice, as provoked, 542. 2. By fearful apprehensions of the divine mercy, as abused, 543. 3. By God's withdrawing his presence, and the sense of his love from the spirit. 544. 4. By God's giving commission to the tempter, more than usually to trouble and disquiet it, 545.

IV. What is God's end and design in casting men into such a perplexed condition. 1. For the wicked or reprobate, it is but the first fruits of hell, and the earnest of their damnation, 546. 2. For the pious and sincere, God designs it, (1.) To embitter sin to them. (2.) To endear and enhance the value of returning mercy, 547.

V. The inferences to be drawn from the whole are,

1. That no man presume to pronounce any thing scoffingly of the present, or severely of the final estate of such as he finds exercised with the distracting troubles of a wounded spirit, 548.

2. Let no secure sinner applaud himself in the presumed safety of his spiritual estate, because he finds no such trouble upon his spirit for sin, 549.

3. Let no person exclude himself from the number of such as are sincere and truly regenerate, only because he never yet felt any of these amazing pangs of conscience for sin, 550.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

PART III.

THE ILL CONSEQUENCES OF MISAPPLYING THE WORDS GOOD AND EVIL.

[The third grand instance of the mischievous influence of words and names falsely applied, with reference to the interests and concerns of private persons in common conversation ; being the fourth and last discourse on Isaiah v. 20.]

ISAIAH V. 20.

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, &c.

I MUST beg your pardon that I here resume the prosecution of a subject, which I have formerly discoursed of in this place, and for some reasons since intermitted, in the courses immediately following.

The discussion of these words I first cast under these four heads.

I. To give some general account of the nature of good and evil, and of the reasons upon which they are founded.

II. To show that the way by which good and evil commonly operate upon the mind of man, is by those respective names and appellations, by which they are notified and conveyed to the mind.

III. To show the mischief which directly, naturally, and unavoidably follows, from the misapplication and confusion of these names. And,

IV. And lastly, To show the grand and principal instances in which the abuse or misapplication of those names has such a fatal and pernicious effect.

The first three of these I despatched in my first discourse upon the words, and in my second made some entrance upon the fourth and last, to wit, the assignation of those instances, which I show, spread as wide as the universe itself, and were as infinite and numberless as all those various ways and accidents by which a man is capable of being miserable. To recount all which in particular, since it was impossible, and yet to rest in universals equally unprofitable, I found it necessary to reduce those fatal effects of the misapplication of these great governing names of good and evil to certain heads, and those such as should comprehend and take in the principal things, upon the good or bad estate of which the happiness or misery of human societies must needs depend.

Which heads were three.

1st. Religion, and the concerns of the church.

2dly. Civil government. And,

3dly. The private interests of particular persons.

Now the first of these three, to wit, the concerns of religion and the church, I fully treated of in my second discourse, and that with particular reference to the state of both amongst ourselves, where I show, that our excellent church has been once ruined, and was like to have been so again, only by the mischievous cant and gibberish of a few paltry misapplied words and phrases; five of which I then instanced in. As,

1st. A malicious calling the rites, ceremonies, and religion of the church of England *popery*.

2dly. A calling the schismatical deserters of it *true protestants*.

3dly. A calling the late subversion and dissolution of our church *reformation*.

4thly. A calling the execution of the laws in behalf of the church *persecution*. And,

5thly and lastly. A calling all base, trimming compliances, and half-conformity, *moderation*.

All which five I then insisted upon at large, and shall not now trouble you with any further repetitions.

After which the second general head to be treated of was civil government; under which I had designed to show how our admirably well-tempered monarchy had been once shaken in pieces by the faction, under the best of monarchs, king Charles I., and was in a fair way to have run the same fate under his son, king Charles II., both of them princes of glorious and happy memory. And all this by the same villanous artifice of a few popular misapplied words; by the senseless, insignificant clink and sound of which, some restless demagogues and incendiaries had inflamed the minds of the sottish *mobile* to a strange unaccountable abhorrence of the best of men and things, and to as fond and furious an admiration of the very worst. Of which sort of words we may reckon these four following.

1st. Their traducing the best of monarchies and the easiest of governments by the odious name of *arbitrary power.*

2dly. Their blackening the king's ablest and best friends, with the old and infamous character of *evil counsellors.*

3dly. Their setting off and recommending the greatest enemies, both of prince and people, under the plausible endearing titles of *public spirits, patriots, and standers-up for their country.* And,

4thly and lastly. Their couching the most malicious, selfish, and ambitious designs, under the glorious cover of *zeal for liberty and property, and the rights of the subject.*

Which four rattling, rabble-charming words, I say, *arbitrary power, evil counsellors, public spirits, liberty, and property, and rights of the subject,* with several others of the like noise and nature, being used and applied by some state-impostors (as scripture was once quoted by the devil), I undertook to prove, were the great and powerful tools by which the faction, having so successfully overturned the government once, was in full hopes to have given it as effectual a turn once more. The prosecution of all which (as well as I was able), I gathered into one entire discourse by itself.

But since all discourses in behalf of the government, partly through the guilt of some, and the false politics of others, have seldom any other effect but to recoil upon the person who makes them, I shall wave and pass over mine, and thereby escape the vanity of a thankless defence of that which is so much better able to defend itself.

III. And so, I now come to the third and last of these three heads; which is, to show *the mischievous influence, the abuse and misapplication of those mighty operative names of good and evil has upon the private interests of particular persons.* And here also I am sensible how boundless a subject I should engage in, should I attempt to give a particular account of all those names or words, by the artificial misapplication of which men promote or ruin the fortunes of one another. The truth is, I might deal them forth to you by scores or hundreds, but I shall single out and insist upon only some few of the most remarkable and mischievous. As,

1. An outrageous, ungoverned insolence and revenge, frequently passing by the name of *sense of honour.* Honour is indeed a noble thing, and therefore the word which signifies it must needs be very plausible. But as a rich and glistering garment may be cast over a rotten, fashionably diseased body, so an illustrious, commending word may be put upon a vile and an ugly thing; for words are but the garment, the loose garments of things; and so may easily be put off and on, according to the

humour of him who bestows them. But the body changes not, though the garments do.

What is honour but the height, and flower, and top of morality, and the utmost refinement of conversation? But then every ruffian and drunken sot is not a competent judge of it; nor must every one who can lead a midnight whore through the streets, or scoff at a black coat or clergyman, or come behind a man and run him through, and be pardoned for it, have presently a claim to that thing called *honour;* which is as much the natural result, as it is the legal reward of virtue. Virtue and honour are such inseparable companions, that the heathens would admit no man into the temple of honour who did not pass to it through the temple of virtue. It is indeed the only stated, allowed way; it is the high road to honour, and no man ever robs or murders upon that road.

And yet, in spite of nature and reason, and the judgment of all mankind, this high and generous thing must be that in whose pretended quarrel almost all the duels of the world are fought. Oh! my honour is concerned, says one. In what, I pray? Why, he gave me the lie. That is, he gave you what perhaps was your own before. But as truth cannot be made falsehood by the worst of tongues, so neither can a liar be made a true man by forcing a coward to eat his words, or a murderer become an honest man by a lucky (or rather unlucky) thrust of a lawless sword. Ay, but he spoke slightly and reflexively of such a lady: that is, perhaps he treated her without a compliment, and spoke that of her which she had rather a great deal practise than hear or be told of. In short, he might represent her in her true colours; and surely there is no reason that such should be always their own painters; and while they live by one measure, describe themselves by another. What right have the votaries, or rather slaves of pleasure, to wear the badge and livery of strict and severe virtue?

Princes, indeed, may confer honours, or rather titles and names of honour; but they are a man's or woman's own actions which must make him or her truly honourable. And every man's life is the herald's office, from whence he must derive and fetch that which must blazon him to the world. Honour being but the reflection of a man's own actions, shining bright in the face of all about him, and from thence rebounding upon himself.

And, therefore, what plea can the bully and hector, the champion of the tavern or the stews, have to this divine and ennobling character? And yet who is it, who so often, so zealously, and so implacably claims it? But the truth is, the name must serve such instead of the thing; and they are therefore so highly concerned about the one, because they know themselves wholly void of the other.

But such a quarrelsome, vindictive impatience of every injury or affront, is not properly sense of honour; for certainly sense of honour does not take away sense of religion; and that, I am sure, teaches us much other things. It teaches a man not to revenge a contumelious or reproachful word, but to be above it. And, therefore, it was greatly spoken by Caius Marius, a man of another sort of mettle and valour from our modern town-blades: "Me quidem ex animi mei sententiâ lædere nulla oratio potest; quippe vera, necesse est, bene prædicet, falsam vita moresque mei superant." He said, he valued not what men could say of him, for if they spake true, they must needs speak honourably of him: if otherwise, his life and his manners should be their confutation. And doubtless, it is a truer and nobler vindication of a man's honour to clear off and confute a slander by his own life, than by another man's death; to make his innocence and his virtue his compurgators, and not *to fight*, but *live* down the calumniator.

And, therefore, this duelling practice (what thoughts soever some may have of it) proceeds not from any sense of honour; but is really and truly a direct defiance and reproach to the laws and justice of a government, as if they could not or would not protect a man in the dearest concern he has in the world, which is his reputation and good name, but left every slandered person to carve out his own satisfaction, and so to make himself both judge in his own case, and executioner too. To prevent which, and to strip this insolent practice of all shadow of excuse, it must be confessed that no government can be too strict and cautious, even to the degree of niceness, in setting a fence about men's good names; and that in order to it, it were better a great deal to cut the tongue out of the slanderer's mouth, than not to wrest the sword out of the dueller's hand.

But it is to be feared, that even our law itself is something defective in this particular. For if the slandered person comes to that, to right him against the slanderer, What damages, says the law, have you sustained by the slander? Prove how far you have been endamaged, and so far you shall be repaired. To which I answer, that it is impossible for any man living to know how much he is endamaged by a slander; for, like some poisons, it may destroy at two, five, ten, or perhaps twenty years' distance; and the venom of it, in the mean time, lie festering and rankling in the mind of some malicious grandee, whose malign influence upon the slandered person, like a worm lying at the root of a tree, shall invisibly wear, and waste, and eat him out of his greatest interests and concerns all his life after; and the poor man all this while never know from what quarter this fatal blast which consumes him blows upon him. And therefore I affirm, that if the laws would assign a punishment commensurate to a slander, according to the true proportions of justice, it must take

its measures, not from the mischiefs which the slander is known actually to do, but from the mischiefs which, according to the nature of the thing, it may do.

This I thought fit to remark, being desirous to cut off all excuse from duellers, and take from those sons of shame their usurped pretences of honour. And indeed, when I consider how we are ridiculed abroad, as making ourselves apes, or rather monkeys to the French, by a fond imitation of their fashions, it may justly seem strange, that in all this time, duelling, which has been proscribed amongst them, should not have grown out of fashion amongst us: especially since it is too, too manifest, that these pests of government cast a greater blot upon it by the blood they shed, than it is possible for them to wash off with their own. And thus much for the first mischievously abused and misapplied word, viz. honour, or sense of honour.

2. Bodily abstinence, joined with a demure, affected countenance, is often called and accounted *piety* and *mortification*. Suppose a man infinitely ambitious, and equally spiteful and malicious; one who poisons the ears of great men by venomous whispers, and rises by the fall of better than himself; yet if he steps forth with a Friday look and a lenten face, with a *blessed Jesu!* and a mournful ditty for the vices of the times, oh! then he is a saint upon earth; an Ambrose or an Augustine; I mean not for that earthly trash of book learning; for, alas! such are above that, or at least that is above them; but for zeal and for fasting, for a devout elevation of the eyes, and a holy rage against other men's sins. And happy those ladies and religious dames, characterized in 2 Tim. iii. 6, who can have such self-denying, thriving, able men for their confessors! and thrice happy those families where they vouchsafe to take their Friday night's refreshments! and thereby demonstrate to the world, what Christian abstinence, and what primitive self-mortifying rigour there is in forbearing a dinner, that they may have the better stomach to their supper.

In fine, the whole world stands in admiration of them; fools are fond of them, and wise men are afraid of them; they are talked of, they are pointed at; and as they order the matter, they draw the eyes of all men after them, and generally something else.

But as it is observed in greyhounds, that the thinness of their jaws does not at all allay the ravening fury of their appetite, there being no creature whose teeth are sharper, and whose feet are swifter when they are in pursuit of their prey; so woe be to that man who stands in the way of a meagre, mortified, fasting, sharp-set zeal, when it is in full chace of its spiritual game. And therefore, as the apostle admonishes the Philippians, Phil. iii. 2, "to beware of dogs," so his advice cannot be too frequently remembered, nor too warily observed, when we have to

deal with those who are always fawning upon some and biting others, as shall best serve their occasions.

3. Some have found a way to smooth over an implacable unalterable spleen and malice, by dignifying it with the name of *constancy*. There are several in the world (and those of no small note for godliness too) who take up disgusts easily, and prosecute them irreconcilably; not by way of revenge (though even that is utterly contrary to Christianity), for revenge, in the nature of it, supposes an injury first done; whereas this generally has nothing of retaliation in it, but commences entirely upon humour, fancy, and false apprehensions, and the man in the whole course of his spite, is perfectly the aggressor.

And in this case, when once his boiling rancour has by error and misapprehension created itself an object to work upon, then presently to work it goes: and no civilities shall be able to mollify such a one, no respects shall gain him, nor obligations take him off; but his spite, being fed by a perpetual fountain, is also carried out with a perpetual motion, raging and raving without end or measure; so that if the man himself could be immortal, his malice would certainly be so too. Nay, and some such have been known to take the sacrament every week, with this diabolical ferment working and fuming in their breast, eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ with a mind ready to suck that of their neighbour.

And if these wretches, in the prosecution of their malicious rage, chance to find themselves (as they do very often) mistaken in their main ground and first motive of it; yet, rather than own a mistake, and not seem infallible, as well as implacable, they will be sure to follow their blow, and the injury must still go on, till it becomes infinite and unmeasurable. And this some call *constancy, greatness, and firmness of mind*, and a kind of approach to unchangeableness; thus in effect clothing a devilish quality with a divine attribute. For it would sound but scurvily, to say in plain terms, that 'such a one is a person of an obstinate, inexorable, impregnable malice; take heed of him, have nothing to do with him.' And therefore it strikes the ear much softer and better to say, 'He is one of great constancy and steadiness, always like himself, and not apt to change or vary from the rule which he has once pitched upon to act by.' Though the real, naked truth, which lies under all this disguise of words, is, that the person so set off is a kind of devil incarnate, void not only of religion, but humanity; his ignorance first apprehends and makes injuries, and then his malice pursues them.

And thus you see Samuel's mantle cast over the devil, and, according to the apostle's phrase, a long and large cloak provided for and fitted to maliciousness. Not that this ill thing does yet so wholly tie itself to this convenient sort of garment, but that sometimes it can wear a gown as well as a cloak, that being often

found both to keep it warmer, and to conceal it better. But woe unto the souls of those pharisaical, hellish hypocrites, if the God whom they pretend such a peculiar relation to, and who is indeed unchangeable in his nature, should borrow some of their constancy, and show himself such in his wrath also!

The schoolmen, speaking of the state of the fallen angels, or devils, say that they are *confirmati in summâ maliciâ;* which, according to the notion now before us, you may, if you please, interpret *constancy.* And our Saviour describing the torments of hell and the punishments of the damned, expresses them by "the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched." So that here is another sort of constancy also. And surely, if we compare them both together, and so pass a right judgment upon the whole matter, there seems to be all the reason in the world, that such as practise the constancy of the former, should at length be rewarded with the constancy of the other.

4. A staunch resolved temper of mind, not suffering a man to sneak, fawn, cringe, and accommodate himself to all humours, though never so absurd and unreasonable, is commonly branded with, and exposed under the character of *pride, morosity,* and *ill-nature;* an ugly word, which you may from time to time observe many honest, worthy, inoffensive persons, and that of all sorts, ranks, and professions, strangely and unaccountably worried and run down by. And therefore I think I cannot do truth, justice, and common honesty better service, than by ripping up so malicious a cheat, to vindicate such as have suffered by it.

Certain it is, that amongst all the contrivances of malice, there is not a surer engine to pull men down in the good opinion of the world, and that in spite of the greatest worth and innocence, than this imputation of ill-nature: an engine which serves the ends and does the work of pique and envy both effectually and safely; forasmuch as it is a loose and general charge upon a man, without alleging any particular reason for it from his life or actions, and consequently does the more mischief, because, as a word of course, it passes currently, and is seldom looked into or examined. And therefore, as there is no way to prove a paradox or false proposition, but to take it for granted; so such as would stab any man's good name with the accusation of ill-nature, do very rarely descend to proofs or particulars; it is sufficient for their purpose that the word sounds odiously and is believed easily; and that is enough to do any one's business with the generality of men, who seldom have so much judgment or charity as to hear the cause before they pronounce sentence.

But that we may proceed with greater truth, equity, and candour in this case, we will endeavour to find out the right sense and meaning of this terrible confounding word *ill-nature,* by coming to particulars.

And here, first, Is the person charged with it false or cruel,

ungrateful or revengeful? Is he shrewd and unjust in his dealings with others? Does he regard no promises, and pay no debts? Does he profess love, kindness, and respect to those, whom underhand he does all the mischief to that possibly he can? Is he unkind, rude, or niggardly to his friends? Has he shut up his heart and his hand towards the poor, and has no bowels of compassion for such as are in want and misery? Is he insensible of kindnesses done him, and withal careless and backward to acknowledge or requite them? Or, lastly, is he bitter and implacable in the prosecution of such as have wronged or abused him?

No, generally none of all these ill things (which one would wonder at!) are ever meant, or so much as thought of, in the charge of ill-nature; but for the most part, the clean contrary qualities are readily acknowledged. Ay, but where and what kind of thing then is this strange, occult quality called ill-nature, which makes such a thundering noise against such as have the ill luck to be taxed with it?

Why, the best account that I or any one else can give of it, is this; that there are many men in the world, who, without the least arrogance or self-conceit, have yet so just a value both for themselves and others, as to scorn to flatter and gloss, to fall down and worship, to lick the spittle and kiss the feet of any proud, swelling, overgrown, domineering huff whatsoever; and such persons generally think it enough for them to show their superiors respect without adoration, and civility without servitude.

Again; there are some who have a certain ill-natured stiffness, forsooth, in their tongue, so as not to be able to applaud and keep pace with this or that self-admiring, vain-glorious Thraso, while he is pluming and praising himself, and telling fulsome stories in his own commendation for three or four hours by the clock, and at the same time reviling and throwing dirt upon all mankind besides.

There is also a sort of odd ill-natured men, whom neither hopes nor fears, frowns nor favours, can prevail upon to have any of the cast, beggarly, forlorn neices or kinswomen of any lord or grandee, spiritual or temporal, trumped upon them.

To which we may add another sort of obstinate ill-natured persons, who are not to be brought by any one's guilt or greatness to speak or write, or to swear or lie as they are bidden, or to give up their own consciences in a compliment to those who have none themselves.

And lastly, there are some so extremely ill-natured, as to think it very lawful and allowable for them to be sensible when they are injured and oppressed, when they are slandered in their good names and wronged in their just interests, and withal to dare to own what they find and feel, without being such beasts of burden, as to bear tamely whatsoever is cast upon them, or such

spaniels as to lick the foot which kicks them, or to thank the goodly great one for doing them all these back favours. Now these and the like particulars are some of the chief instances of that ill-nature which men are more properly said to be guilty of towards their superiors.

But there is a sort of ill-nature also that uses to be practised towards equals or inferiors; such as perhaps a man's refusing to lend money to such as he knows will never repay him, and so to straiten and incommode himself only to gratify a shark; or possibly the man may prefer his duty and his business before company, and the bettering of himself before the humouring of others; or he may not be willing to spend his time, his health, and his estate, upon a crew of idle, spunging, ungrateful sots, and so to play the prodigal amongst a herd of swine; with several other such unpardonable faults in conversation (as some will have them) for which the forementioned cattle, finding themselves disappointed, will be sure to go grunting and grumbling away, and not fail to proclaim him a morose, ill-conditioned, ill-natured person in all clubs and companies whatsoever; and so that man's work is done, and his name lies grovelling upon the ground in all the taverns, brandy-shops, and coffee-houses about the town.

And thus having given you some tolerable account of what the world calls ill-nature, and that both towards superiors, and towards equals and inferiors, (as it is easy and natural to know one contrary by the other,) we may from hence take a true measure of what the world is observed to mean by the contrary character of good-nature, as it is generally bestowed.

And first, when great ones vouchsafe this endearing elogy to those below them, a good-natured man generally denotes some slavish, glavering, flattering parasite, or hanger-on, one who is a mere tool or instrument, a fellow fit to be sent upon any malicious errand; a setter or informer, made to creep into all companies; a wretch employed under a pretence of friendship or acquaintance, to fetch and carry, and to come to men's tables to play the Judas there; and in a word, to do all those mean, vile, and degenerous offices, which men of greatness and malice use to engage men of baseness and treachery in.

But then, on the other hand, when this word passes between equals, commonly by a good-natured man is meant, either some easy, soft-headed piece of simplicity, who suffers himself to be led by the nose, and wiped of his conveniences by a company of sharping, worthless sycophants, who will be sure to despise, laugh, and droll at him, as a weak, empty fellow, for all his ill-placed cost and kindness. And the truth is, if such vermin do not find him empty, it is odds but in a little time they will make him so. And this is one branch of that which some call good-nature (and good-nature let it be), indeed so good, that according to the wise Italian proverb, "It is even good for nothing."

Or, in the next place, by a good-natured man is usually meant neither more nor less than a good fellow, a painful, able, and laborious soaker. But he who owes all his good-nature to the pot and the pipe, to the jollity and compliances of merry company, may possibly go to bed with a wonderful stock of good-nature over-night, but then he will sleep it all away again before the morning.

5thly. Some would needs have a pragmatical prying into, and meddling with other men's matters, *a fitness for business*, forsooth, and accordingly call and account none but such persons men of business; a word which of late years carries with it no small character, though the thing really intended by it most commonly imports something mischievous, and justly to be abhorred. To be fit for business is no doubt a just commendation to any man; but then let it be the business which a man's station, condition, or profession properly calls him to; that is, in other words, let it be his own business, and not another man's.

As for instance: what has a divine to do to act the part of a courtier or a merchant, and much less of an informer or a solicitor? Is the court, or the exchange, or every man's house, except his own, the fittest place for him to study and bestow his time in? And yet many both value themselves, and are valued by others, only for such preposterous, absurd, unbecoming practices; too just an apology, God knows, for the sacrilegious encroachments of the late times of confusion. For why might not laymen and mechanics then invade the pulpit, as well as men of the pulpit at any time intrude into the secular employments of laymen? And I cannot see how that sly, specious (but now stale and silly) pretence of doing good (though set off with never so much devotional rapture and grimace) can warrant any man to spend his time there where he has nothing to do. For though philosophy teaches that no element is heavy in its own place, yet experience shows, that out of its own place it proves exceeding burdensome. And this observation will be found to reach something further than the four elements, which the peripatetics affirm the world to be composed of.

But to return to our *men of business:* there are some whose restless, insinuating, searching humour, will never suffer them to be quiet, unless they dive into the concerns of all about them; they are always outward bound, but homeward never; they are perpetually looking about them, but never within them; they can hardly relish or digest what they eat at their own table, unless they know what and how much is served up to another man's; they cannot sleep quietly themselves, unless they know when their neighbour rises and goes to bed; they must know who visits him, and who is visited by him; what company he keeps; what revenues he has, and what he spends; how much he owes, and how much is owed to him. And this, in the judgment

of some, is to be a man of business; that is, in other words, to be a plague and a spy, a treacherous supplanter and underminer of the peace of all families and societies: this being a maxim of an unfailing truth, that nobody ever pries into another man's concerns, but with a design to do, or to be able to do him a mischief. A most detestable humour doubtless, and yet, as bad as it is, since there is nothing so base, barbarous, and dishonourable, but power joined to malice will sometimes make use of it, it may, and often does, raise a man a pitch higher in this world, though it is to be feared it may send him a large step lower in the next.

But what says the scripture to this meddling, inquisitive, waylaying temper? Why, St. Peter gives his judgment of it plainly enough, in 1 Pet. iv. 15: "Let none of you," says he, "suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." But what? does this great apostle range these men of business, the great probationers for all that is honourable, both in church and state, amongst thieves and murderers? Certainly this shows that St. Peter was neither a man of business himself, nor ever desired to be so; and yet for all that, Christ thought him nevertheless qualified for the work and business of an apostle.

But whatsoever St. Peter's judgment, or St. Peter himself was, it is certain that the Pharisees were men of business, and that in a very eminent manner, as appears by their behaviour both in the court of Queen Alexandra, and afterwards in the court of Herod; where by their tricks and trinketing between party and party, and their intriguing it with courtiers and court-ladies, they had upon the matter set the whole court together by the ears; according to that blessed account and character given of them by Josephus, ch. 3 of his 17th book of the Jewish Antiquities. And there seldom wants a race of such meddlesome vermin in the courts of all other princes, so exactly like those men of business, their true ancestors, the Pharisees, that could they be but contemporaries, and live together, it would be hardly possible to distinguish which were the copy, and which the original.

And thus I have given you a small specimen of those artificially misapplied terms, by which crafty and malicious men word others out of their interests and advantages, and themselves into them. I say, it is but a specimen or taste of those numerous, or rather innumerable instances which might be produced; two of which especially I had thought to have spoken something more fully to; namely, the calling covetousness good husbandry; and prodigality, generosity. According to the first of which, Psalm x. 3, it is made the very mark and description of a wicked man, that "he speaks well of the covetous, whom God abhorreth;" that is, he speaks well of a thief and an idolater; for so the scripture calls the covetous man, who makes his money his god and his neigh-

bour too; a wretch, who, under the mask of frugality, scarce ever has a penny ready for the poor, though never without his hundreds and his thousands of pounds ready for a purchase.

And no less is the abuse in surnaming the prodigal person generous or liberal, while he is spending and borrowing, and borrowing and spending, and never considering that it is the height of injustice, as well as folly, to affect to be generous at other men's cost.

There is also another notable abuse of words, and that of so contagious an influence, that according to the prophet's expression, Amos vi. 12, "It turns judgment into gall, and righteousness into hemlock;" and that is, the calling of justice, cruelty, and cowardice, mercy; a fatal and pernicious confusion of the very best of things certainly, by which the two main pillars and supports of government and society, of policy and morality, to wit, justice and mercy, are made utterly useless and ineffectual, nay, rather contrary and prejudicial to those high and noble purposes.

These things, I confess, might be further insisted upon, and many more such instances alleged; but I shall stop here, it being so easy a matter for every man to multiply particulars from his own observation.

And therefore now to recollect and sum up all that has been delivered upon this vast and even immense subject; I suppose we have seen enough to deserve the woe or curse mentioned in the text over and over; a woe which cannot possibly surmount the guilt of the persons and practices which it stands denounced against, which is so foul, that it justly draws after it all the vengeance of God in the next world, and the utmost hatred and detestation of men in this. For as it is in Prov. xxiv. 24, "He who says to the wicked, Thou art righteous, him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him." And I suppose the same curse belongs to him who robs a man of his innocence, and says to the righteous, "Thou art wicked." All or most of the miseries and calamities which afflict mankind, and turn the world upside down, have been conceived in, and issued from the fruitful womb of this one villanous artifice.

For cast your eyes upon the affairs of religion, and you shall see the best, the purest, and most primitively ordered church in the world, torn, and broken, and sacrificed to the rage and lust of schism and sacrilege, only by being libelled and misrepresented, under the false guise of *formality*, *popery*, and *superstition*. You shall see the ruin of it effected under the notion of *reformation*; the laws of it made odious and ineffectual by the name of *persecution*; and lastly, the whole constitution of it baffled and betrayed by company of treacherous, trimming, half-conformists, acting under the vizard of *moderation*.

From the church, cast your eyes upon the state, and see the best, the mildest, and most religious prince that ever swayed a

sceptre, butchered, and weltering in his own blood, before the gates of his own royal palace, by the barbarous hands of his infinitely obliged, but infinitely cruel and ungrateful subjects; and this by misreporting him to his people, as a designer of popery and arbitrary power, things as contrary to his gracious nature and principles as light to darkness; and yet under this character he was pursued with fire and sword, violence and rebellion, and at length doomed to death by a sentence as black and false as hell itself, pronouncing him a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy.

Next to this, see the faithfullest of his friends torn from him and destroyed, under the notion of *evil counsellors;* and the same trick offered at again in his son's time, by an endeavour to strip him of his friends too, under the name of *pensioners.*

And then, as a consequent of all this, see the vilest men aspiring to, and grasping at the sovereign power, by endearing themselves to the rabble under the plausible affected titles of *public spirits, standers-up for their country, and for the liberties, properties, and the rights of the subject;* while "inwardly they were ravening wolves," made up of nothing but tyranny and atheism, covetousness and ambition.

From hence cast your eyes and thoughts upon the concerns of private families and persons, and there oftentimes you shall see husband and wife irreconcilably divided, parents estranged from their children, and children enraged against their parents; and all this tragical consuming flame generally kindled and blown up by the foul breath of some lying, tale-bearing wretch, throwing all into a combustion by feigned stories.

You may also see the hope and support of many a flourishing family untimely cut off by the sword of a drunken dueller, in vindication of something that he miscalls his honour.

Another you may see wasted and undone by law-suits, and that through the false arts of his unconscionable, greedy counsel, colouring over crazy, unsound titles with fallacious, encouraging pretences.

Again, if at any time you see old and long acquaintances broken off with immortal, inextinguishable feuds, it is a thousand to one odds but it has happened by the base offices of some devilish tongue which has passed between them.

And lastly, you may see others bereaved of the favour and countenance of those whom they have deserved best of, and so, crushed in all their interests, only by being misrepresented by secret whispers and false informations.

But it would be endless to recount all particulars: and therefore in one word. Do but cast over in your minds all the schismatical contrivances against the church; all the seditious attempts upon the state; all the disturbances of families; and lastly, all the practices that have passed upon particular per-

sons, by which the wicked have been encouraged, and the good oppressed; and you may lodge them all within the compass of this one comprehensive, boundless common-place, as being directly derivable from, and naturally resolvable into this one church and state and family-confounding practice, "the calling good evil, and evil good."

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON II.

PART I.

DELIVERANCE FROM TEMPTATION THE PRIVILEGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

2 Peter ii. 9.

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.

I do not know a greater and a juster ground of discouragement to wise and thinking men, with reference to the high concerns of their immortal souls, than to consider, that over and above that innate corruption brought with them into the world, and so mightily strengthened and improved by the continual restless working of the same, in the actual commission of sin ever since, that there should, I say, besides this be an external agent and evil spirit incessantly blowing up this fire within us, exasperating, stirring up, and drawing forth this active quality in the several mischievous actings thereof: and this evil spirit withal, of such force, such sagacity, and such unspeakable vigilance for the compassing of men's destruction, as far surpass all that men themselves can be brought to do, even for their own salvation. A sad case certainly, and such as must needs cast the issue of the war between them upon very unequal terms; where the superior in malice is as much the superior in strength too; and where (to make the odds yet greater) man on the one side must venture all, and the tempter on the other has nothing to lose.

It is true indeed, that the will of man can never be forced by any created or finite spirit, good or bad, but may still stand its ground against all attacks from without. Nevertheless there are so many ways to allure, inveigle, and persuade it by ill, but suitable objects from abroad, that this bare natural power, or rather possibility, of resisting them, in the issue of the matter, proves but a very poor security to it, being so often urged and overborne (as it is) by the powerful impressions which such objects are almost continually, and with so much success, still making upon it.

Nor is it only the present state of corrupt nature which gives force and efficacy to these importunate assaults: but it is altogether as manifest, that the forementioned qualifications of this subtle agent, even in the state of innocence itself, made him so

much too hard for our first parents, that under all the advantages of that blessed estate, he got ground of them so speedily and so effectually, that he made a shift to out them of paradise and their innocence too, before they had passed one whole day in either.

Whereupon a universal contagion seizing the whole mass of human nature, and all mankind (the second Adam only, by his miraculous conception, excepted) being ever since born in sin, and not only born, but fatally grown up in it, and made slaves to it too; how almost could it be imagined, that there should be so much as room for any further addition to the forlorn and miserable estate of a creature so weak, so wretched, and so wholly biassed to his own ruin, as man, upon this account, undeniably is? Indeed, with so mighty a bias is he now carried on towards it, that (one would have thought) it might have given even this restless and malicious spirit himself (were he capable of it) his *quietus est:* it being hard to judge to what purpose so skilful an artist (and so perfectly acquainted with his business) should employ himself in planting engines and laying trains to blow up one, who, by the freest choice of his own will, and in spite of all the principles of self-preservation, is upon every turn so ready to destroy himself. He who will needs venture into the deep, with neither strength nor skill to encounter the boisterous element, will quickly find the stream alone more than sufficient to bear him down and sink him, without the concurrence of either wind or tide to speed his destruction.

And this, God knows, is but too much our case. Every one of us, from the bare sway of his own inherent corruption, carrying enough and enough about him to assure his final doom, without any further impulse from without, to push home and finish the killing stroke. He who is ready to breathe his last by a fever, surely needs not to be despatched with a sword.

But this is not the worst nor saddest of a man's condition, with reference to temptation, neither; for though it be too certain, that the corruption of man's nature is such, that it is sufficient to destroy him without the tempter's doing any thing towards it, yet it is as certain also, that it never actually destroys him, but the tempter has a hand in that fatal work. Such an adversary have we, the sons of Adam, to contend with; an adversary, who in conjunction with his two grand allies, the world and the flesh, will be always carrying on an implacable war against souls. For God has declared so much, and men have found and felt it; and (whatsoever atheism or infidelity may object) neither must the justice of the one be disputed, nor the experience of the other be denied. Nevertheless, from what has been said, this I think may very rationally be inferred, that there cannot be a stronger argument to evince the necessity of a superior good spirit to assist and bear men through the difficulties of a Christian course, than this one consideration, that, besides a man's own natural corrup-

tion, there is an evil spirit continually active and intent to seduce and draw him from it. Upon which account most certainly it is, that the heart of man, so weak in itself within, and so assaulted from without, if not borne up and assisted by something mightier than itself, is by no means an equal match for the tempter.

In the prosecution of the words, I shall consider these two things,

1st, Who are here to be understood by "the godly." And

2dly, What is here meant by "temptation." And here,

1st, For the first of these we may take this for a certain, though perhaps an obvious direction of inquiries in this matter, viz. That we are not to look or seek for "the godly," here spoken of by the apostle, where we may be sure beforehand not to find them; that is to say, amongst such as with the highest confidence, or rather impudence, not only arrogate, but engross this great character to themselves; such as measure their godliness by looks, postures, and phrases, by a jargon of scriptural cant, and a flow of some warm rapturous and fantastic expressions; all according to the sanctified whine and peculiar dialect of those times of infatuation, when noise and nonsense so mightily bore down sense and reason, and the godliness then in vogue turned religion quite out of doors. It was the very shibboleth of the party; nothing being so much in fashion with them as the name, nor more out of fashion, and out of sight too, than the thing itself.

But godliness (blessed be God) is not a mere word or pretence, a trick of state, or political engine to support a party or serve a turn, and much less an occasional cover for a stated hypocrisy. No, it springs from a nobler soil and a deeper root, and like the great object of it, God himself, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:" in its original divine; in its rule unchangeable.

And therefore, since bare negatives are not to be rested in, where so high a perfection is to be accounted for—a perfection comprehending in it all the graces of a Christian, and no less than the image of God himself new stamped upon the soul,—he, and he only, can lay claim to so glorious a qualification, who is actually in covenant with God, and that not only by external profession, but by real relation; a relation entitling him to all the benefits of a federal estate, by coming up to the conditions of it; or, to be yet more particular, he who with a full and fixed resolution of heart has taken the whole law of Christ in the several precepts of it, with the utmost hardships attending them, for his portion in this world, and the promises of it for his inheritance in the next: he who rules his appetites by his reason, and both by his religion: he who makes his duty his business, till at length he comes to make it his delight too: he whose sole design is to be pious, without affecting to be thought so: he who lives and acts by a mighty principle within, which the world

about him neither sees nor understands; a principle respecting all God's commands without reserve; a principle carrying a man out to a course of obedience, for the duration of it constant, and for the extent of it universal: and lastly, in a word, he, and he only ought to pass for godly, according to the stated, unalterable rules and measures of Christianity, who allows not himself in the omission of any known duty, or the commission of the least known sin. And this certainly will, and nothing less that I know of can, either secure a man from falling into temptation, or (which is yet a greater happiness) from falling by it. All other measures not coming up to this standard are vain, trifling, and fallacious, and to all the real purposes of religion wholly ineffectual. They give us but a godliness of a man's own making, and consequently of his own rewarding too, if ever it be rewarded at all. And thus much for the explication of the first thing; namely, who and what the godly are, to whom the text promises so great a privilege, as to be "delivered from temptation."

2dly, The other thing to be inquired into and explained by us is, what is here meant by "temptation;" a thing better known by its ill effects, than by the best description. The Greek word is πειρασμὸς, which signifies *trial*, and so imports not so much the matter, as the end of the dispensation. So that any thing whatsoever which tends to try and discover what is in the heart or will of man, is and may be (in one respect or other) called "a temptation." In which sense, outward crosses and afflictions are so called, and the people of God are bidden by the apostle "to rejoice, when they fall into divers temptations," James i. 2. And according to the several ways and methods, whereby God draws forth and discovers what is lodged in the hearts of men good or bad, God himself is said "to tempt them," that is, to *try* or *prove* them. In which respect he was said to have *tempted* Abraham in Genesis xxii. 1. But (the common and most received use of the word having added something of malignity to its first and native signification) generally in scripture it denotes not only a bare trial, but such a one as is attended with a design to hurt or mischieve the people so tried. In which sense the scribes and pharisees are so often brought in by the evangelists tempting our Saviour; that is, they were still trying him with captious, ensnaring questions, as we find in Luke xi. 54, and elsewhere, "to get something out of his mouth to accuse and destroy him." But chiefly and most frequently the scripture means by it such a trial, as is intended to supplant and ruin a man in his spiritual concerns, by inducing him to sin, and so subjecting him to the fatal effects and consequents thereof. And thus on the contrary, it is said of God, "that he tempts no man," in James i. 13. This sort of temptation always proceeding from a man's own inherent corruption and concupiscence, set on work by their trusty confederate and co-worker the devil, whose peculiar province

and perpetual business being to tempt men this way, he has accordingly, by way of eminence, appropriated the odious name of *tempter* to himself. And therefore, to give a full account of this whole matter in short: any thing or object whatsoever, whereby a man, either through the instigation of the devil or his agents, or the corruption of his own heart, or the particular circumstances of his condition, or all of them together, is apt to be drawn or disposed to some sinful action or omission, is that which the scripture principally and most properly calls a temptation.

And this, I conceive, gives us so true and full an account of the general nature of temptation, that no particular sort of it can be assigned, but what is directly comprehended in it, or fairly reducible to it.

As for the sense in which the word ought to be taken here, it may be, and no doubt with great truth is, in the full latitude of it, applicable to both sorts of temptation: it being no less the prerogative of God's goodness and power to deliver men from such trials as afflict them, than from such as are designed to corrupt them. Nevertheless, I think it also as little to be doubted, that the text chiefly respects this latter signification, and accordingly speaks here most designedly of such a deliverance as breaks the snares, and defeats the stratagems, by which the great and mortal enemy of mankind is so infinitely busy, first to debauch, and then to destroy souls.

Nor can the very reason of the words (so far as I can judge) infer any thing else; forasmuch as all the instances here given by the apostle, in the foregoing part of this chapter, as first, "of persons seduced and drawn aside by false prophets and teachers, bringing in damnable doctrines amongst them," in the first verse; and then of Noah delivered from that general inundation of sin, by which one deluge (as I may so express it) brought upon the world another, in the fifth verse; and lastly, of righteous Lot's deliverance from the filthy conversation of the Sodomites, in the seventh verse, are all of them but so many notable examples of several persons, some delivered to, and others delivered from, such a sort of temptation, as without affecting the outward man, were to shoot their poison and pollution only into the inmost powers of the soul or spirit, wounding and working upon that by secret and more killing impressions.

Add to this, that the deliverance from temptation here insisted upon, is set forth as a singular privilege and special act of favour vouchsafed by God to the righteous, and that in a very distinguishing way (as shall be shown presently); whereas a deliverance from temporal crosses and calamities can hardly, with any congruity to other places and passages of scripture, be termed so; since such crosses, for the most part, are there declared to be the lot and portion of the godly in this world, the known mark of their calling, a proof of their saintship, and the very badge of their profession.

Nevertheless, allowing this sense of the word not to be wholly excluded here, the argument we may draw from thence, for our present assertion, will run, *à fortiore*, thus: That if it be so signal a mercy for God to deliver the saints from the mere outside and surface of misery, in those temporal pressures and adversities, which, though possibly they may sometimes incommode the man, yet can never reach the saint, and though they break the casket, can never come at the jewel, certainly it must needs be a mercy of a much higher rate to deliver them from such temptations as carry nothing but hell and death along with them, and are of so strong, so malign, and so fatal an influence upon the soul, as to drive at nothing less than its utter ruin and damnation.

And now, if upon what has been said it be here inquired, whether they are the righteous only whom God delivers from temptation, and that no such deliverances are ever vouchsafed by him to any of the contrary character?

I answer, that I can find nothing in scripture or reason to found such a doctrine upon; but that such deliverances both may be and sometimes are vouchsafed to persons, far enough from being reckoned godly, either in the accounts of God or man. And first, that they may be so, we need no other reason to evince it than this, that God in these cases may very well restrain the actions, without working any change upon the will or affections. And this, both with reference to the evil spirit himself whom he may control, and keep from tempting; as likewise with reference to wicked men, from whom he may, in several instances, cut off the opportunities of sinning, or complying with the tempter, and yet leave them as habitually wicked as they were before: God's restraining grace often extending itself to such as his sanctifying grace never reaches. And in the next place, that such deliverances not only may be, but sometimes actually are afforded, to persons represented under no note of piety or virtue, but much otherwise, those three memorable examples of Abimelech, Esau, and Balaam, the first in Genesis xx., the second in Genesis xxxiii., and the other in Numbers xxii., sufficiently demonstrate.

So that we may rationally conclude, that even wicked persons also are sometimes sharers in such deliverances; but still so, that this by all means ought to be observed withal, that the said deliverances are dealt forth to these two different sorts of men upon very different grounds; viz. to the former upon the stock of covenant or promises; to the latter upon the stock of uncovenanted mercy, and the free overflowing egress of the divine benignity, often exerting itself upon such as have no claim to it at all. The sovereign Author of all good, in this, as in innumerable other cases, scattering some of the bounties of his common grace, as well as those of nature, amongst the sons of men, for the wise and just ends of his providence in the government of the world; which

would quickly dissolve and sink into confusion, should even the wickedest of men be always as wicked, as the tempter (if he had his will) would assuredly make them.

Now this exposition of the words thus premised, I shall cast the prosecution of them under these three particulars.

I. To show how far God delivers persons truly pious out of temptation.

II. To show what is the grand motive or impulsive cause inducing God thus to deliver them. And,

III. And lastly, To show why and upon what grounds this is to be reputed so great a mercy and so transcendent a privilege.

I. And for the first of these, namely, *how far God delivers persons truly pious from temptation.* This I shall endeavour to show by considering them with reference to temptation these three ways: 1. As before they enter into it; 2. As they are actually entered into it; and, 3. and lastly, As they are in some degree prevailed upon by it.

All ways of deliverance from it being accordingly reducible to, and comprehended within the compass of these three, viz.,

1. Of being kept from it; as the church of Philadelphia was, in Rev. iii. 10.

2. Of being supported under it; as Joseph in Genesis xxxix., and St. Paul in 2 Cor. xii. 9, we read, were. And,

3. And lastly, Of being brought out of it, as in Luke xxii. 31, we find St. Peter to have been, and as all true penitents and sincere converts never fail to be.

Each of which particular heads shall be distinctly considered by us. And,

1. God delivers by way of *prevention,* or keeping off the temptation; which, of all other ways, is doubtless the surest, as the surest is unquestionably the best. For by this is set a mighty barrier between the soul and the earliest approaches of its mortal enemy. Whereas, on the contrary, the first step in any destructive course still prepares for the second, and the second for the third; after which, there is no stop, but the progress is infinite: forasmuch as the third more powerfully disposes to the fourth, than the first or second; and so the advance proportionably goes on.

Which being so, and the soul no less than the body, being subject to so many distempers, too likely to prove fatal to it, must not preventing remedies in all reason be both the gentlest and the safest for it too? Distance from danger is the strongest fence against it: and that man needs not fear burning (be the fire ever so fierce) who keeps himself from being so much as scorched.

If we consider the sin of the fallen angels themselves, there might, without dispute, have been a prevention of it, though no

recovery after it; and a "keeping of their first station" (as the apostle expresses it), though when once quitted, no postliminious return to it, no retrieving of a lost innocence or a forfeited felicity.

For which causes, the preventing methods of grace may deservedly pass for some of the prime instances of the divine mercy to men in this world. For though it ought to be owned for an eminent act of grace to restore one actually fallen, yet there are not wanting arguments to persuade that it is a greater to keep one from falling. Not to break a limb is more desirable than to have it set and healed, though never so skilfully and well. Preservation in this, as in many other cases,* being better a great deal than restoration; since after all is done, it is odds but the scar will remain when the wound is cured and the danger over.

And therefore happy, no doubt, by a distinguished sort of happiness, are those favourites of heaven, who have both omnipotence and omniscience, infinite power and infinite wisdom, jointly engaged by infinite mercy, so to guard and watch over them through all the various turns and hazardous encounters in their Christian course, as to bring them off from the enemy safe and untouched, and to work their deliverance rather by rescue than recovery. It is a work in which God, as I may so speak, shows his art and skill. "God knows how to deliver the godly," says the text. The whole action is carried on by preventing grace, under the conduct of that high attribute of God's knowledge; and especially that noble branch of it, his foreknowledge, by which he has the remotest futurities and the loosest contingencies under a certain and exact view. For though indeed the divine knowledge, as all other knowledge, be of itself inoperative (the proper nature of knowledge being only to apprehend and judge of what comes before it, and rather to suppose than to work upon its object); yet if the divine knowledge did not certainly and infallibly foresee and comprehend every turn, motion, and foredetermination of man's will, with reference to every object or motive that can possibly be presented to it, how could God so steadily and effectually ward off all those evils and temptations, which the several events, accidents, and occasions of our lives (all of them variously affecting our wills) would from time time expose us to? Omnipotence itself could not certainly prevent a danger, if omniscience did not foresee it. For where there is no prescience, there can be no prevention. And this is a demonstration, that all such preventive deliverances are so peculiarly and wholly from God, that for want of this perfection no man living can possibly thus deliver himself. "I will guide thee with mine eye," says God, Psalm xxxii. 8. Next to the protecting shelter of God's wing, is the securing prospect of his eye.

Numerous are the deliverances that God works for us, which

* See Sermon xxii. in the first volume of my Sermons, concerning Prevention of Sin, upon 1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33.

we see, but infinitely more those which we do not see, but he does. For how often is the scene of our destruction contrived and laid by the tempter! How often are his nets spread for us, and those of too curious and fine a thread to be discernible by our eye; and we go surely treading on to our ruin, when suddenly the mercy of a preventing providence stops us in our walk, and pulls back our foot from the fatal snare!

Unspeakable are the advantages vouchsafed to mankind by God's preventing grace; if we consider how apt a temptation is to diffuse, and how prone our nature is to receive an infection. It is dangerous dwelling even in the suburbs of an infected city. Not only the touches, but also the very breath of a temptation is poisonous; and there is sometimes (if I may so express it) a contagion even without a contact.

And if the conscience has not wholly lost its native tenderness, it will not only dread the infection of a wound, but also the aspersion of a blot. For though the soul be not actually corrupted and debauched by a temptation; yet it is something to be sullied and blown upon by it, to have been in the dangerous familiarities of sin, and in the next approach and neighbourhood of destruction. Such being the nature of man, that it is hardly possible for him to be near an ill thing, and not the worse for it.

For if we accurately observe the inward movings and actions of the heart, we shall find that temptation wins upon it by very small, secret, and almost insensible gradations. Perhaps in its first converse with a tempting object, it is not presently surprised with a desire of it; but does it not hereby come to lose some of its former averseness to it? Possibly at first view it may not esteem it amiable, but does it not begin to think it less ugly? Its love may not yet be kindled, but is not its former loathing something abated? The encroaches of a temptation are so strangely insinuating, that no security under it can be comparable to a being remote from it: and therefore, if we hate its friendship, let us dread its acquaintance, shun its converse, and keep aloof off from its company. For he who would gain a complete triumph over it, must know that to grapple with it is at best a venture, but to fly from it is certain victory.

And if so, where can a man be so safe as in the arms of sin-preventing grace? the sovereign influence of which will appear not only from those peculiar effects of it upon the pious and the virtuous, but also from those great things done by it even for the worst and wickedest part of mankind (as we hinted before), and those indeed so great (how little soever taken notice of) that without them common society could not possibly subsist; but the moral and political frame of the world would fall back into a fouler and more deformed chaos than that out of which this material one was first produced. For how come men generally, and that so extremely against the bent of nature, to submit to

laws?—laws which for the most part lay a restraint upon their strongest appetites, and which, if they would but generally agree to break and to throw off, could signify nothing. How comes the multitude to have such an awe upon their spirits for governors and magistrates, though they know themselves so vastly superior in strength to those who govern them? And why rather is not all order and government upon these terms utterly confounded and turned topsy-turvy, by thefts, rapes, incests, perjuries, and murders, and irresistibly borne down by an overflowing torrent of all kinds of villany, forcing its way through the very bowels of it? Is it because there is not corruption enough in man's nature to prompt and carry him out to all these enormities? or because there are not sinful objects enough to inflame and draw forth his corruption? No, it is but too sadly manifest that there is too plentiful a stock of both, to suffer the world to be quiet one moment, if they could but once, like two mighty seas, meet and join, and flow in together.

But all the stop is from an infinitely wise, preventing power, which keeps all in order here below, by separating between ill objects and worse appetites, by cutting off the opportunities of sin, and so both diverting and defeating the temptation. For how many might, and without doubt would have stolen, as Achan did, had the same allurement been played before them! How many might have committed David's murder and adultery, had they been under David's circumstances! How many might have denied and forsworn Christ with St. Peter, had they been surprised with the same danger! How great a part of the innocence of the world is nothing else but want of opportunity to do the wickedness they have a mind to! And how many forbear sinning, not because God's grace has wrought upon their wills, but because a merciful Providence has kept off the occasion.

And thus much for the first degree of God's delivering men from temptation; a benefit, which, for the common ends of his providence, he sometimes vouchsafes to all sorts of men promiscuously, but most eminently and frequently to the good and pious, whom for higher ends he often rescues and preserves from the first offers and approaches of sinful objects and occasions; and thereby gives his first answer to that most important and divine petition in the Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

2. We are now, in the next place, to consider such persons as advanced a step further, and *as they are actually entered into temptation;* and so also God is at hand for their deliverance. But here we must first premise, what it is to enter into temptation: and that in one word is, for a man to meet with such objects, to converse with such occasions, and to be brought under such circumstances of life, as have in them a peculiar

fitness to provoke and draw forth the working of his corruption, whatsoever it be; but especially of that particular corruption which is strongest and most predominant in him. So that a man finds something ready to take hold of his heart and affections, which he cannot easily keep off or disengage himself from. Thus when a covetous man meets with opportunities of gain, fit to feed and gratify his covetousness; or a proud, aspiring man with honours and preferments, suited to his pride and ambition; or lastly, a lustful man with objects or incentives apt to kindle and inflame his lust, with other the like provisions for the several sinful appetites of man's corrupt nature, such a one must know that he is entered into temptation; his standing is slippery, and his retreat doubtful, and what the issue will be in his final coming off, God alone knows, in whose sole power it is to fetch him out of the jaws of death, and to work his deliverance.

It is possible indeed, that, by the peculiar and extraordinary favours of divine mercy, a person so engaged may come off clear and entire, so that the temptation shall not be able so much as to fasten or make the least impression upon him; but then this is very rare, and no more than possible, and not to be effected but by a power infinite and divine. For as it was God who suspended the natural force of that material fire from acting upon the bodies of the three children mentioned in Daniel iii., so it is God alone who must control the fury of this spiritual flame from seizing upon the soul, having always so much fuel and fit matter there for it to prey upon.

And for an eternal monument of his goodness, he has not left us without some such heroic instances as these upon record in his word, that so the saints may receive double courage and confidence, having their deliverance not only sealed and secured to them by promise, but also that promise ratified and made good to them by precedents and examples, like so many stars appearing, both to direct and to comfort the benighted traveller.

And here, first of all, we have Joseph brought under as fierce a trial as the wit and malice of hell could contrive, being tempted to a vile action by two of the most staggering inducements that could well work upon the mind of man, to wit, power and favour in his lord's family, if he complied with the temptation; and the shame, infamy, and reproach of the very villany he was tempted to, in case he refused it. And no doubt so long as the slander was believed of him, he lay in prison under as black a note of ingratitude and baseness, and with as great an abhorrence of all good men, as the charge of so foul a crime, if true, must deservedly have branded him with. And now, could any thing be imagined so grievous and intolerable to a virtuous mind, as to bear the infamy of a lewd and base act, only for refusing to commit it? Yet this was the plunge and temptation which he was brought into, but God brought him out of it, and that with-

out the least spot or sully, but with a mind as clear, and a conscience as unblemished, as the reputation it has given his immortal name to all posterity.

In the next place, let us cast our eye upon Moses in the court of Pharaoh, that is, in the shop of the devil, the school of vice, the scene and sink of all lust and impurity, and the very high road to perdition; so that perhaps the court of Egypt was a greater plague than any that afterwards befell Egypt; a place in which he was to converse with all sorts of allurements, to walk upon traps and snares, to have all his senses accosted with continual messages from the devil; and in a word, to see, hear, and taste nothing but the pleasures of sin, and scarce to be able to look off from a temptation. This was his condition, and thus he was bred and trained up, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, a candidate for hell, and a probationer for damnation. And yet even here, as it were, in the very bosom of sin and death, God preserved him innocent and untouched, and like Gideon's fleece, clean and dry, while all was drenched with a foul and a killing dew round about him. Nor did God preserve him only from ill things, but prepared him also for great, and perhaps the greatest that Providence ever thought fit to achieve by the hand of a mere man.

Again, such another instance have we in David, encountered with a temptation which seldom happens, and is seldomer resisted; to wit, an offer to make his way to a promised throne and sceptre by the blood of his bitter and avowed enemy, then perfectly at his mercy; and a greater temptation could hardly befall a man than that which should promise him with one stroke both to gratify his ambition and to satisfy his revenge, to put a crown upon his head, and his mortal enemy under his feet. And yet, as dazzling and alluring as this offer was, David had something within him stronger than the strongest assaults of these two violent and transporting affections; something that would not suffer him to be disloyal to gain a crown, nor receive possession of that kingdom from the devil, of which God himself had given him the reversion. No temptation could make him snatch God's work out of his own hands, whose sole prerogative it is to dispose of crowns and kingdoms, to appoint, and to exclude, and to hasten as well as alter successions.

But now, may there not be yet a greater temptation than either of these? something more glistering than a crown, and more luscious than revenge? If there may, surely it was that which St. Paul and Barnabas met with in Acts xiv., the offer of divine worship and adoration. For to be like God was the first temptation which robbed man of his innocence: and so pertinaciously was this urged upon these two apostles by the men of Lystra, that it is said, ver. 18, that "Paul and Barnabas could hardly restrain them from doing sacrifice to them;" for the oxen,

the garlands, and the priest of Jupiter, were all ready for that purpose. But now, how did this strange *ἀποθέωσις*, think we, affect and work upon these holy men? Why, to be sure not as it would have worked upon a Simon Magus, whose whole heart, soul, and study, was set upon being canonized and worshipped by the sottish Samaritans for a kind of demigod, Acts viii. 10; nor yet as it would have affected a Herod, who would needs be a god too, though of the rabble's and the devil's making, Acts xii. 22. But these men, whose hearts God had touched with a true and tender sense of religion, were so far from being exalted, that they were cast down, humbled, and astonished at such impious and extravagant honours; and no doubt rejected them with so great a horror and detestation, that they would much rather have been sacrificed themselves than have endured any to sacrifice to them.

Now in all these notable instances of success against temptation we must observe this; that the tempting object was brought home and close to them, and laid directly before them, and that with all imaginable advantages of allurement, together with full opportunity and power to commit the sin which they were tempted to; and yet the persons so tempted came off, as we have shown, not in the least tainted or prevailed upon. From all which it is evident that God secures his saints against temptation, not only by antecedent preventions keeping them from it, but also by his subsequent grace supporting them under it, and bringing them victorious out of it; which is the second degree of deliverance.

3. And lastly, we are to consider the persons hitherto spoken of, as not only entered into temptation, but also *as in some measure prevailed upon by it.* For that a person truly pious, sincere, and sound at the heart towards God, may, through the inveiglements of the world and the frailty of his own nature, be sometimes surprised, and for a while drawn into the ways of sin, I do no more doubt or question, than that a sound and healthful constitution may sometimes be disordered with heats and colds, battered with wounds and bruises, and indisposed by swellings and breakings-out; and yet all this without destroying the main substantial health and habit of the body. And he who asserts the contrary, and acknowledges no holiness but what is perfection, will upon trial find it a much easier matter, by the faulty passages of his life, to prove himself sinful and unholy, than by the very best and holiest of them to prove himself perfect.

But that I may give some light and resolution to this great and weighty case of conscience, how far a person truly godly and regenerate may, without ceasing to be so, be prevailed upon by temptation, I will here set down the several degrees, steps, and advances, by which a temptation or sinful proposal gradually wins and gains upon the soul, and those all of them comprised in

St. James i. 14, 15: "Every man," says the apostle, "is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." I say, in these words we have a full and distinct account of five several steps or gradations, by which a temptation grows upon, and at length prevails over, the souls of men.

1. The first of which we may call *seduction.* As when the mind, being surprised or suddenly struck with the taking representation of some sinful act or object, begins to think of it, so as by such thoughts to be for the present drawn aside from its duty. For seduction literally and properly signifies a man's being drawn away, or drawn aside. As the Greek word here has it. He is ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος, drawn off, or drawn away by his concupiscence. As for instance, when a man is intent upon the honest works of his calling, and two or three lewd companions come, and desire his company to a debauch; here he first begins to hearken to the proposal, and to think with himself of the pleasure and satisfaction which he might find by complying with it. During which thought, he ceases for that time to intend the business he was upon before, or to employ his mind about it. And this is seduction, the first invading step of a temptation, whereby it seizes a man's thoughts, and actually draws him off from his duty, by diverting the intention of his mind from that to something else; much like the first unbending of a bow, which though it does not spoil it, yet for the present renders it unserviceable.

2. The second degree of temptation may be called *enticement* or *allurement.* As when a man does not only think upon a sinful object or proposal, but also suffers his thoughts to dwell, and, as it were, to brood upon it with delight, pleasing his imagination by frequent reflections upon it, and representing it to himself under its most advantageous colours and circumstances, while he thus turns and rolls it about in his fancy. And this is expressed here by the next Greek word, δελεαζόμενος, which the translation renders *enticed*, and imports in it a metaphor taken from the practice of such as cast or lay some bait before any fish or fowl; which, as soon as they spy it, do for a while view, and look upon it with appetite and pleasure, before they are brought to take it in, or swallow it. Now if a temptation chance to be stopped here, the main and principal drift of it is defeated; nevertheless this is a great and a dangerous step, for when it comes so far, it rarely happens but it proceeds further. And therefore,

3. The third degree is, when after such possession had of the thoughts and fancy, the temptation comes to make its way into the *consent of the will,* and to gain that great fort also; so that the mind begins to purpose, and accordingly to contrive the commission of the sin proposed to it: and this the Greek text

here calls *συλλαμβάνειν*, to conceive; *εἶτα δὲ ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα*, "when lust," or concupiscence, "has conceived;" so that the soul hereby grows, as it were, big and impregnate with a temptation. In which case, as all immoderate fulness naturally endeavours after evacuation and vent, so the soul now becomes restless, and, as it were, in labour, till it disburdens itself, and discharges what it has thus conceived by some sinful act or commission. And this directly introduces and brings in,

4. The fourth degree of prevalence which a temptation gets over the soul; and that is, the actual eruption of it in the perpetration or *commission of the sin* suggested to it; and this in the forementioned place of St. James is called *τίκτειν ἁμαρτίαν*, to "bring forth sin;" when lust or concupiscence in the heart sends forth a cursed brood or litter in the actions; like a fountain, which having been for some time imprisoned and pent up in the bowels of the earth, at length forces its way through, and casts forth its streams with a violent, uncontrolled effusion.

5. The fifth and last degree, completing the victory which temptation obtains over a man, is, when sin comes to that pitch as to reign, and by a frequent habitual commission of it, to domineer and lord it in a man's conversation; in respect of which we are said, Rom. vi. 17, "to be the servants of sin," as not being in our own power, nor having the disposal and command of our own faculties, but upon all occasions being turned and carried about by the tyrannical, impure dictates of an overruling corruption; in which respect also we are said, Rom. vii. 23, to be "led captive by sin," as being conquered and overmastered by the violent assaults of it, and then, as it were, pinioned and fettered (as slaves and conquered persons use to be), and so by consequence put out of all possibility either of resistance or escape.

And this the apostle St. James, in the forecited place, calls *τελεῖν ἁμαρτίαν*, the finishing of sin; *ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον*, "when sin is finished, it brings forth death." And it is frequency and continuance in sin which properly finishes it; for it is this which gives it its full maturity and utmost perfection, which habituates, and even turns it into another nature, which a single act or commission of sin cannot do. And when a man comes once in this manner, not only to act sin, but even to be acted and possessed by it, as an absolute slave to all its commands, he is then ripe for hell and perdition, and fit only to be sent there by the next destroying providence.

These are the several degrees by which a temptation grows and prevails upon the hearts of men; which that I may the better represent and set before you at one view, I shall gather and sum them up all into one instance; and it shall be that of Demas, mentioned by the apostle, 2 Tim. iv. 10, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Here we will first consider Demas in full communion with the

church, and a zealous professor of Christianity; during which strict and self-denying profession it is suggested to his mind (by the devil, we may be sure) what profit and advantage he might reap by relinquishing the severe course, and swimming with the common stream of the world. And this thought prevails so far with him, as to take him off from his accustomed strictness in the actual pursuit of his duty. And this is the first degree of temptation, which is called *seduction.* From this he proceeds to entertain and feed his mind with frequent thoughts of those worldly gains and emoluments, reflecting upon them with much pleasure and complacency. And this is the second degree of temptation, which the scripture calls a *being enticed,* or beguiled. From this he goes on, and from the pleasure of those thoughts begins to purpose and intend to put them in execution; and this is that third degree of temptation, by which sin is said *to conceive.* From hence he makes a step further, and actually lays down the profession of Christianity, and so striking off to the world, fully executes those purposes and intentions; which is the fourth degree of temptation, by which sin is said to *bring forth.* And lastly, having come so far, he adds the concluding cast, and continues and perseveres in the sinful pursuit of his worldly advantages, never returning, nor recovering himself by repentance to his former profession. And thus at length we see him got to the top of his sin, which by this perseverance in it properly finishes and completes, and so stands registered in the black roll of final apostates.

Having thus reckoned up the several degrees of temptation, and set before you the fatal round and series of the devil's methods for destroying souls, let us now in the next place inquire, how far God vouchsafes to deliver the pious and sincere out of them.

In answer to which, I first of all affirm, that God's methods in this case are very various, and not to be determined or declared by any one standing or universal assertion. Sometimes by a total and entire deliverance, he delivers them from every degree and encroachment of a temptation. Sometimes he lets them fall into the first degree of it, and receive it into their thoughts; but then delivers them from the second, which is to cherish and continue it there, by frequent pleasing reflections upon it. Sometimes he gives way to this too, but then hinders it from coming to a full purpose and consent of will. Sometimes he lets it go thus far also, and suffers sin to conceive by such a purpose or consent: but then, by a kind of spiritual abortion, stifles it in the very birth, and so keeps it from breaking forth into actual commission. And lastly, for reasons best known to his most wise providence, he sometimes permits a temptation to grow so powerful, as to have strength to bring forth, and to defile the soul with one or more gross actual eruptions.

But then, in the last place, by a mighty overpowering grace, he very often, as some assert, or always, as others affirm, keeps it from an absolute, entire, and final conquest. So that sin never comes to that height as to reign in the godly, to bear sway, and become habitual. But though its endeavours are not always extinguished, nor its sallyings out wholly stopped, yet its dominion is broken. It may sometimes bruise and wound, but it shall never kill. It may possibly be committed, but it shall never come so far as to be finished. But the Spirit of God will interpose and cut it short in its progress.* This I say is the judgment of some in this great and arduous point, who accordingly apply that glorious supporting promise made in Rom. vi. 14, to all who are actually in a state of grace, that "sin shall not have dominion over them."

Now the foregoing particulars, upon a due improvement of them, will naturally teach us these two great and important lessons.

1st. Concerning the singular goodness as well as wisdom of our great lawgiver, even in the strictest and severest precepts of our religion.

2dly. The other concerning the best and surest method of dealing with the tempter and his temptations. Of each of which very briefly.

1st. And for the first of them: the severest precepts of Christianity seem to be those which abridge men in the very first motions and desires of their corrupt affections; such as are delivered in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew. According to which, anger passes in the gospel account for murder, and looking and lusting, for adultery. Which are hard lessons, you will say, and indeed, considered barely in themselves, cannot well appear otherwise. But then, if you consider withal that the just reward of murder and adultery without repentance (which is not so easy a work as some imagine) is certain and eternal damnation, and that lust and anger directly lead to them; is it not the height of wisdom and goodness too, to hinder the consummation of those soul-wasting sins, by obliging us to withstand them in their first infancy and beginnings? for then it is certain that they may be dealt with, and suppressed with much more ease, than when by several degrees of lust and desire cherished and allowed, they are ready to break forth, and, as it were, even force their way into an actual commission. Is it not a much safer and surer way to victory, to attack an enemy in his weakness, than in his full strength, while he is yet levying his forces, than when he has actually taken the field? to crush the cockatrice in the egg, than to grapple with it when it is grown a serpent? Is it not much easier to prevent the conception of sin, than to suffer it to

* *Memorand.* That there are some remarks of the same nature, concerning the steps and progress of sin, in Sermon xxii. of my second volume.

conceive, and then to forbid it to bring forth? to suffer lust and anger to boil, and rage, and ferment in a man's breast without control, and then to damn him for a lustful or revengeful act, which perhaps after such a progress made by those sins in his desires, it is scarce morally in his power to forbear?

Certainly it is a much greater mercy and tenderness to the souls of men, to represent the first movings of the heart towards any forbidden object as unlawful in themselves, and destructive in their consequence, and thereby to incite the soul to a vigorous resistance of them while they may be mastered, and with ten times less trouble extinguished, than after they are once actually committed, they can be repented of? No doubt sin is both more easily and effectually kept from beginning, than, being once begun, it can be stopped from going on. For every, even the least motion towards sin, not immediately checked (though it be but in the thoughts) is a certain step to a further degree, and consequently a dangerous preparative to the very last completion of it. And therefore all those precepts of Christ, which seem at first view to carry with them so much of rigour and severity, are indeed quite contrary, and nothing else but the gracious and benign contrivances of a superlative wisdom and mercy combining to do us good; of wisdom, as suggesting the best course to prevent sin; and of mercy, as prescribing the surest way to save the soul.

2dly. The other great lesson which we may learn from the foregoing particulars is, concerning the most effectual method of dealing with the tempter and his temptations; and that is, to follow the method of their dealing with us. A temptation never begins where it intends to make an end.

Would the devil tempt a man to rebellion? He will not persuade him to set up his standard, to take up arms, and declare himself immediately, unless he have to deal with one who is as much fool as knave (a very unfit composition to make a rebel of); but he will first tempt him to ambition, then to discontent, then to murmuring or libelling against his superiors, and from that to caballing with factious and seditious malcontents like himself; and by these several ascents and degrees the tempter will effectually form and fashion him into a perfect Absalom, a Catiline, or a Cromwell, in time.

Or would he work a man up to the height of debauchery or uncleanness? Why, in such a case it would be too black and impudent a proposal to bid him leap into his neighbour's bed presently. And therefore he will make his approaches like a more experienced artist, first inveigling him with loose thoughts, from thence leading him to impure desires, and from such desires to the further incentives of lewd, lustful, and licentious conversation; and by these several stages of filth and folly, he shall at length arrive at such a pitch of guilt and infamy, as shall render

him a public nuisance, a very pest and infection, and able to give the very air he breathes in the plague, or something worse.

These are some of the devil's methods by which he tempts and destroys souls; and such as are spiritually wise will take the very same course to preserve them. So that, would a man keep the devil out of his life and actions, let him keep him out of his thoughts and desires. And so long as he observes this way of dealing with him, that man surely can be in no danger of the guilt of murder, who makes a conscience of the first sallies of an angry thought, or an abusive word; nor is he under any likelihood of being ever brought to defile his neighbour's bed, who dares not allow himself in a wanton look or a lewd desire.

But on the contrary, can any one in his wits think to secure himself from the practice of any vice, after he has suffered it to fix and seat itself in his affections? Will he let the devil (the most expert of wrestlers) get within him, and then expect that he should not throw him? The divine wisdom, I am sure, prescribes us quite other methods for our spiritual security, even the sure and sovereign methods of prevention. God's prescription is, that we bestir ourselves betimes, that we nip sin when it begins to bud in the thoughts, and crop it off as soon as it shoots forth in the desires. And though possibly such severe disciplines and restraints of ourselves may look but like chimeras or romances to persons immersed in their sensuality and enslaved to their vice, yet they are really great and necessary duties, and such as must be practised, and therefore certainly may.

And the better to convince us that they are so, let this one consideration always dwell upon our minds; that there is no man so far hardened by, and overgrown with sin at present, but there was a time of his life once, in which his heart could have served him to have done all this. And if, by a long inveterate course of sinning, he has since, in effect, sinned away his liberty and his conscience so far, as to become insensible and inflexible, and unable to be wrought upon by that which would both have wrought and prevailed upon him heretofore, such a moral, acquired impotence ought, in all reason, to lie at his own door; for it is certain that he cannot charge it upon God, whose wisdom, justice, and goodness is such, that he never fails those, who are not first failing to themselves.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON III.

PART II.

THE PRIME MOTIVE, OR IMPULSIVE CAUSE OF THE DELIVERANCE OF THE PIOUS OUT OF TEMPTATION.

2 Peter ii. 9.

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.

I have formerly made some entrance into these words, in which, after a short explanation and account given of these two things, viz. 1. Who are here to be understood by the godly; and, 2. What is here meant by temptation; I cast the further prosecution of the words under these following particulars.

I. To show how far God delivers persons truly pious out of temptation.

II. To show what is the grand motive, or impulsive cause, inducing God thus to deliver them. And,

III. And lastly, To show why, and upon what grounds, this is to be reputed so great a mercy and so transcendent a privilege.

The first of these three I have already despatched, and proceed now to the

II. Namely, to show *what is the prime motive, or grand impulsive cause, inducing God to deliver persons truly pious out of temptation.*

Now this is twofold: 1. The free mercy of God; and 2. The prevailing intercession of Christ.

1. And for the first of these; the free, sovereign inclination of divine mercy. Concerning which, if we duly and exactly consider the absoluteness and simplicity of the divine nature, nothing can be more agreeable to the conceptions which we form of it, and consequently more rational, than to state the first reason, or impulsive cause of all God's actings within himself. So that as we must acknowledge the different issue and success of persons brought into the same condition of danger or distress, to depend wholly upon the exercise or suspension of the divine mercy towards such persons; in like manner are we to resolve the exercise or suspension of this mercy into the divine will.

Thus in the present case: that one man is delivered out of the plunges of temptation, and another suffered to sink and perish

under them, it is from an act of mercy vouchsafed to the one, and not to the other; and that this is not equally vouchsafed to both, it is from the free resolution of that sovereign, supreme will, which "has mercy upon whom it will have mercy," and is by no means bound to save or deliver those who have freely destroyed themselves.

And that this is so is evident; for if the first motives or impulsive cause of this deliverance were not wholly from God himself, then it must proceed from something in the person who is to be delivered; and if so, it must be either from the necessity of his condition needing such a deliverance, or from the worth and goodness of his person deserving it. But it will appear to be from neither. Not from the necessity of his condition in the first place: for if this were the first and chief cause inducing God to deliver men, then it would equally do the same for all in the same condition. But the contrary is too manifest; for some under the same circumstances of temptation are delivered, while others are suffered to perish by it. Nor yet, in the next place, can the cause of this deliverance be stated upon the goodness or piety of the person delivered. For certain it is, that no degree of piety whatsoever could ever yet absolutely privilege the very best of men from being tempted, that is to say, either from first entering into, or for some time continuing under a temptation; as several in all ages, who have been most remarkably pious, have found and felt by sad experience. Nor is it less certain, that it is not a man's piety which is the cause inducing God to vouchsafe him a final deliverance out of temptation, forasmuch as it could not antecedently induce God at first to rescue or keep him from it, when yet it is manifest that the piety of the said person must needs have been at that time greater and more untainted, than after the temptation had made some breach upon it; as it always in some measure does, before the tempted person comes to be perfectly conquered by it. As for instance, it must of necessity bring him to the commission of it, and (if it were no more) this must needs degrade his piety to a lower pitch than it was at before the temptation began. And then if a higher degree of piety could not obtain so much of God as to keep the man from first entering the snare, surely it cannot be imagined, that after he had lost some degrees of that piety by being taken and held in it, it should, under those disadvantages, be more prevalent with God to deliver him out of it, than at first to keep him from it; which experience shows it did not.

And therefore it is clear, that the first grand motive, or impulsive cause of this deliverance, is not to be sought for in any thing inherent in the person delivered, but in the sole and sovereign good-will and pleasure of his great deliverer.

But you will say, Does not the text itself state the cause and reason of this deliverance, upon the godliness of the persons

delivered? For does not the apostle here expressly tell us, that they are the godly whom God delivers out of temptation?

To this I answer, that in all the actings of divine mercy we must distinguish between the first impulsive cause of the act, and the proper qualification of the object upon which that act is exerted. The confusion of which too frequently occasions no small mistakes and blunders in discoursing about these matters.

God promises deliverance out of temptation to the godly, and yet their godliness is not the cause of this deliverance, any more than of God's making such a promise. It is indeed the qualification of the person who is to be delivered; so that without it the deliverance (upon a federal account, as was said before) would not be; but still the cause of it is quite another thing.

A prince, for instance, has a hundred of his subjects in captivity, and makes a declaration that he will redeem so many of them as are of such a certain age, taking no notice of the rest. Now in this case, we cannot say that their being of such an age was the first impulsive cause, inducing their prince to redeem them; but his own good pleasure, which first made him take up a resolution to redeem such persons, and to make this the condition of it. Their being indeed of such an age is the qualifying condition, rendering them the proper objects of such a redemption; so that such, and none but such, are redeemed: but the cause of that redemption it is not, that being, as we have shown, to be sought for elsewhere.

Now the case is much the same, where God vouchsafes to deliver men out of temptation. Whence is it, that upon such trials befalling men, some few escape, and in the issue are brought off without ruin, while thousands fall at their right hand and at their left? Is it the extreme misery of their condition moving God's compassion, or the worthiness of their persons requiring this of his justice, which causes their deliverance? No; these are not, cannot be the cause, for the reasons before mentioned; they are indeed the proper qualifications rendering them fit to be delivered, but the free mercy or good pleasure of God is the main, leading, impulsive cause that actually they are delivered.

The thing, therefore, which is eminent from first to last in this whole transaction, is mercy; mercy, which is its own argument; mercy, the first and grand motive of which is itself. For if it were not so, what could there be in a sinful, polluted creature to engage it? There is indeed enough to need, but nothing to deserve it. But the divine compassion, wheresoever it fixes, removes all obstacles, answers all objections, and needs no other reason of its actings, but its own sovereign, absolute, unaccountable freedom.

2. The other impulsive cause of God's delivering the saints out of temptation, is the intercession of Christ on their behalf.

And this does not in the least derogate from, or contradict our first assertion; ascribing this great work and benefit only to divine mercy: forasmuch as it is the sole effect of mercy, that we have such an intercessor; and there is no opposition in subordination.

Now the two great parts of Christ's priestly office are his meritorious satisfaction, and continual intercession. By the first of which he purchased for us all spiritual blessings, and by the latter he actually applies them. The first he perfected here on earth upon the cross, and the latter he now performs in heaven.

And with what efficacy and success he discharges this great work of intercession there, sufficiently appears from that constant, never-failing prevalence which still attended his prayers here. For he himself expressly tells us that the Father always heard him, John xi. 42. Heaven was always open to his prayers, and they could not but enter where he who made them did command. There could be no frustration or denial where every request had the force of a claim, and every petition was founded in a purchase.

The divinity of Christ's person, and the surpassing value of his merits, put a commanding sovereignty into all his desires; so that every thing which he asked of his Father was indeed a petition of right; and since his divinity made him able to give, it was one part of his humiliation that he vouchsafed to ask. And for this reason, some of his requests run *stylo imperatorio*, in a kingly dialect; and we sometimes find him not only preaching, but also praying, as one having authority: John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me, to behold my glory." It was not a mere prayer, but a kind of compound address, made up of petition and demand.

And now this way of asking, as high and as efficacious as it is, is wholly employed by Christ for delivering the saints out of temptation. Judas, we know, was tempted, and fell without recovery. Peter also was tempted, and fell, but rose again. Now, whence was this difference in the issue of the temptation? Why, those words of our Saviour will inform us, Luke xxii. 31, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat." And according to his desire he had him, and sifted him to the utmost, and discovered how much chaff and foul stuff was lodged in his heart, which he himself knew not of. Yet still for all this, the wheat was but sifted only, not destroyed; and Christ gives us the reason of it in the next words, "I have prayed that thy faith fail not." And if Christ had not prayed for him in that wretched condition, it is to be feared that he would scarce have prayed for himself.

For though indeed the spirit of prayer and fervent supplication be one of the most effectual means to bring a man out of temptation, yet sometimes the temptation is so far beforehand with a

man, that it prevents him, seizing and prepossessing his will and affections; and that to such a degree, that he has no heart to pray against it; but like a thief it steals upon him, and then binds his hands and stops his mouth, so that he can neither lift up heart nor hand to call in aid from heaven. In which forlorn estate, if Christ prays not in his stead, and solicits his Father for the succours of recovering grace, the sinner is left remediless in the cruel grasp of his insulting enemy, to be crushed and devoured by him at his pleasure.

And now, what Christ did for Peter and other of his saints, while he was here upon earth, the same he still does, and that with advantage; for all believers know that he is in heaven, where he has changed his place indeed, but not his office; his condition, but not his affection.

What it was to be tempted, our Saviour knew of old, by the sure, but sharp convictions of his own experience: and therefore treats such as are tempted with all the sympathizing tenderness that fellowship in suffering can produce in a mind infinitely merciful of itself; as it is expressly affirmed, Heb. ii. 18, "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour those also who are tempted." To which we may add these words, Heb. vii. 25, that "he liveth for ever, to make intercession for us." And from both together we have all that comfort, that a boundless compassion, supported by an infinite power and an endless duration, can afford.

And this is that invaluable advantage which we reap from having such a high priest as can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." For as he who has broken a limb, having his choice of several chirurgeons equally skilful, would much rather choose one who had not only cured many others, but had also suffered the same disaster, and felt the same pain and anguish of a broken limb himself: for that from such a hand he might rationally expect not only a sound, but a gentle cure; a cure in which compassion should combine with skill, and make one ingredient in every application. In like manner, it is not so much the greatness, the power and majesty of our intercessor, that should animate persons under a temptation to address to him, as his having drank of the same cup and passed through the same furnace himself. From which one endearing consideration it is, that the prayers of such persons find stronger arguments to enforce them in the breast of him who hears, than they can derive from the heart of him who makes them.

For as it is commonly, and perhaps very truly said, that none knows the heart of a father, but he who has been a father; so none knows what it is to be pursued and worried with the restless buffets of an impure spirit, but he who has endured the same terrible conflict himself. Christ has endured it, and his experience moves his compassion, and his compassion engages his

prayers; and where he has promised us his prayers, we may promise ourselves the success.

And thus I have shown, that the great impulsive cause of the saiuts' deliverance out of temptation, is partly the free, sovereign, distinguishing mercy of God, and partly the mediatorial intercession of Christ: that is, they have a gracious Father, and a powerful Advocate; and therefore, being assaulted, they are not conquered, and being tempted, are not destroyed.

But now, by way of objection to the foregoing particulars, you will say, Does not this doctrine open a door to presumption, and naturally encourage men to venture themselves into temptation, by giving them such assurances of an after-deliverance from it? Does it not tend to lessen the awe and dread they should have of their spiritual danger, by telling them that the mercy of God and the intercession of Christ are engaged for their recovery?

I answer, No; for as the persons who are here said to be delivered are persons truly sanctified and regenerate by a principle of grace, which was wrought upon and changed their nature (so much being implied in the very name and character of the godly), so it is utterly against the very nature of such a principle to draw such consequences from the mercy of God and the intercession of Christ. For moral ingenuity could not do so, and therefore grace much less. "The love of God," says the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 14, "constraineth us." And as it is impossible for a principle of love to exert acts of hatred, so it is equally impossible for a principle of holiness to suggest to the heart such villanous deductions, as to make the very mercy of God an argument to offend him. Every faculty or principle is carried by its own nature, as by a strong bias, to act suitably to itself; and you may as well expect that the fire should cool, or the water dry, or a false proposition issue from a true, as that a principle of grace should argue or discourse in this manner. "He who is born of God," says the apostle, 1 John iii. 9, "cannot sin, because he is born of God." That is, the principle which constitutes a man a new creature, cannot incline or induce him to sin. And therefore, how did Joseph answer and repel the temptation which accosted him? Why, he neither pleaded the disgrace nor danger that might ensue upon it, but the utter inconsistency of that principle which he both acted and was acted by, with the commission of so vile a fact. "How can I do this great wickedness?" says he, Gen. xxxix. 9. Not only, how shall I, but, how can I do it? As if he had said, there is something within me so utterly contrary to, and so wholly averse from this wicked proposal, that I cannot comply with it, I cannot frame or bring my will to it.

In like manner, for a person regenerate, acting by that principle which makes him so, to take confidence to venture upon

a temptation, from an assurance of God's mercy or Christ's intercession, is a thing absolutely unnatural, and consequently impossible.

But you will say, How then can a person endued with this mighty and divine principle come ever to be prevailed upon by a temptation?

Why, the reason of this is, because such a one does not always act according to this principle, but sometimes either through surprise or neglect of his duty, or remissness in it, or want of watchfulness over himself, the working force and energy of this mighty principle comes for a while to suspend its actings, and to lie, as it were, stupified, or in a trance; the giant is asleep, and the sword of the Spirit is not drawn, during which fatal interval or cessation the flesh and the devil take their advantage to assault, and get ground even of the best of men.

Nevertheless, the case is surely very different, when a man thus overtaken with a kind of spiritual slumber drops into a temptation; and when with his eyes open, and all the powers of his soul awake, he argues and debates the matter with himself for and against the temptation; and in the issue of that debate comes at length to a formed resolution to venture upon it from a confidence, that after he has taken his fill of his sin, the divine mercy will deliver him out of it. This, I say, is a case so vastly different from the former, that though the former may very well consist with a habit of piety and sincerity, yet this latter looks so very ill, and has in it something so desperately wicked, that I very much question whether it be, or can be, incident to the heart of a person truly regenerate.

But because this is so great a mystery of iniquity, and apt to work so fatally upon the minds of such as think themselves sincere and regenerate, but indeed not so; I think it may be of no small use to look into and resolve this case of conscience, namely, whether a regenerate, a godly, or sincere person (which are all but several words for the same thing) can have any rational assurance, before he enters into a temptation, that being once prevailed upon by it, he shall in the issue be delivered out of it?

To which I answer in these two propositions:

1. That a person under such circumstances can have no antecedent assurance one way or other, either that he shall or shall not be delivered. And,

2. That it is more probable, and that he has greater reason to believe, that he shall not be delivered, than that he shall.

Of both which propositions with as much brevity as the thing will bear.

1. And for the first of them, I affirm, that such a one cannot certainly and positively conclude that he shall not be delivered: forasmuch as this would be a bold, unwarranted intrusion into

the counsels of God, and a limitation of that mercy, the precise measures of which are determined by bounds known only to God himself. But this, I must confess, is an error of such a nature, that men need not be much cautioned against it, as being still more apt, in all their expectations of mercy, to conclude too much for, than at all against themselves.

2. And therefore I affirm also, on the other side, that much less can a person thus offering himself to temptation have any ground of assurance that he shall in the issue be brought out of it.

For the clearing of which matter, we must observe, that the temptations here spoken of are generally such as lead to great sins; great, I say, either for the matter of them, such as are blasphemies, perjuries, rebellions, murders, adulteries, thefts, extortions, and the like; or great for the manner of committing them, as being committed against the clear light and conviction of conscience, or, as the scripture sometimes expresses it, presumptuously, and with a high hand, and with full deliberation. All which kind of sins wound and waste the conscience, grieve the Holy Spirit, hazard a man's final and eternal estate; and in a word, make a very great and dangerous alteration in his spiritual condition.

Those, I say, are the sins which we are now treating of; for such, and such only, the devil drives at in most of his temptations, whether he effects them or no: but the malignity of a temptation is to be measured by the greatness of the sin, which it designs to bring a man to. And concerning these sins I affirm, that when any man is tempted to them, he can have no sufficient assurance, that, in case he should be prevailed upon by them, God will deliver them out of them. And the full, serious, thorough consideration of this, is that flaming sword, which God has placed before the door and entrance of every such temptation, to warn all who value the present peace and future happiness of their souls, to fly from it as they would from the regions of death and the mansions of the damned.

But you will say, Have there not been several instances of persons whom God has delivered out of temptation, after they have been prevailed upon by it? And if so, may not others in following times, of the same qualifications and under the same circumstances, antecedently assure themselves of the same deliverance?

To this I answer, first, that of all persons whom God has at any time delivered out of temptation, I believe it will be hard to produce any one who ever entered into it with such a presumption. But secondly, I add moreover, that it is hardly possible for any man to assure himself, that his qualifications and circumstances are exactly the same with those who have been delivered. Besides that, in the last place, there is nothing to oblige God to

vouchsafe the same mercy to persons under the same circumstances.

But you will urge further, that there are not only instances and examples, but also promises of such a performance in several places of the scripture, and particularly in the text; where, by God's knowing how to deliver, the apostle no doubt meant his will and purpose to deliver the godly out of temptation. And if so, may not such persons be beforehand sure of their deliverance; since, where there is a promise on God's part, there may and ought to be an assurance on ours.

To this also I answer, that we are still to remember, that neither this nor any other the like promises are made immediately to any particular person, but only in general to the godly and regenerate; amongst which no man can with any rational evidence account himself, while he is either actually committing, or at least purposing to commit some great sin; as every man under the power of such temptations (as we have mentioned) certainly is. And consequently, while he cannot be sure of his regeneracy, neither can he be sure that a promise made only to the regenerate does at all belong to him.

But you may yet say, Suppose that such a one had a former assurance of his regenerate state, may he not now, from his remembrance of that, draw a present assurance that he shall be delivered out of all temptations?

For the clearing of which, I observe, that there are two sorts of assurance: the first consisting in such a certain persuasion of a man's regenerate estate, as is subject to no mistake about it: the second consisting in such a persuasion, as excludes all actual doubting of it. Which two sorts of assurance differ as much from one another, as a man's being sure of a thing differs from his being only confident of it; which latter he may very easily be, and yet be far enough from the former. Accordingly in the case now before us, I shall not consider that first sort of assurance, consisting in an infallible persuasion of a man's regenerate estate; it being much questioned by many, whether such an assurance be attainable in this life, unless by the special and immediate gift of God: albeit all confess, that in case he should vouchsafe to any one so high a privilege, it would certainly be attended with such a confirmed habit of holiness, as would effectually keep him who had it from all gross and deliberate sins.

But then as for the other sort of assurance, which only excludes all actual doubting of a man's regenerate estate, it is much another thing; for being raised chiefly upon the stock of a forward confidence, and not supported with an equal measure of grace, it may rise and fall, ebb and flow, and in many cases and with several persons come at length totally to be lost.

Which being premised, I answer to the foregoing question in the negative, and that upon the ground of a double hypothesis. As,

1st. Of that which holds that a person truly regenerate may fall from his regeneracy, and through his sin cease to be what he was. According to which opinion, the person here spoken of, who is either actually committing or fully proposing to commit some great sin, has no small reason to suspect the case wholly altered with him as to his regeneracy, and that whatsoever he was before, he is now fallen from it; and consequently, notwithstanding any former assurance of it, can at present lay no claim to a promise made only to persons continuing under that estate.

2dly. The other hypothesis or opinion, upon which I ground a further answer to the aforesaid question, holds the certain final perseverance of every regenerate person in a state of regeneracy. And according to this indeed, if a man be once truly assured that he is in such a state, it must follow that he will be always in the same. But then I add, that it does not also follow that he shall always be assured that he is so. But on the contrary, that the truth of man's former assurance, in the case of great sins committed, becomes very questionable, as most likely (for all his former confidence) to have been taken up at the first upon false grounds; and consequently must needs sink and cease, though his regenerate estate should continue. For even a true proposition may be assented to upon a mistaken ground. And as to the point now before us; nothing is more certain, than that former assurances (though never so free from all doubts when first entertained) will vanish upon a present great guilt; since admitting that it should not wholly change a man's regenerate state, yet it will be sure to blot and weaken (if not quite extinguish) those evidences which he had once built his assurances thereof upon. David no doubt was a person truly regenerate, and in favour with God, and so continued to his life's end; and as little is it to be doubted but that at most times he fully reckoned himself to be what really and in truth he was; but that with a constant uninterrupted confidence he always thought himself so, cannot I am sure with any warrant from scripture be affirmed. For though we find him sometimes with a kind of triumphant assurance declaring, that God held him with his right hand, and that he would both "guide him with his counsel, and after that receive him with glory," Psalm lxxiii. 24; expressions, one would think, of a confidence too high to rise higher, and too strong to be brought lower; yet elsewhere we find this mighty hero upon the very brink of despair, or rather plunged into the depths of it, as appears from those terrible desponding outcries, Psalm lxxvii. 7, 8, 9, "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever, and does his promise fail for evermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious, and hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Every verse, every sentence, and word here, speaking nothing but the horrors of a hopeless soul, and the struggles and agonies of one sinking under the dismal

apprehensions of the divine wrath. Nor are we so much to wonder, that such fearful breaches should be made upon the confidence of so eminent a saint, if we consider what temptations and what sinful failings God was sometimes pleased to suffer him to be overtaken with. To all which vicissitudes of confidence and distrust about a man's spiritual estate, we may add this further consideration; that according to the natural course of things, the insincerity of the latter part of a man's life is a greater presumption against the sincerity of the former part of it, than the sincerity of the former can be a security against the insincerity of the latter. And therefore let a man's spiritual state and condition be as safe and good as he would persuade himself that it is, yet if he has no certain knowledge thereof (as in the case of great guilt we have shown that it is not to be had) he can conclude nothing from such his condition concerning the final issue of a temptation. From all which it must follow, according to either of the forementioned hypotheses or opinions (without my espousing either of them for my own), that whether a man really be or be not regenerate, yet when he is actually prevailed upon by a temptation, he cannot assure himself that God will deliver him out of it; and consequently, before the temptation, can have no certain prospect of such a deliverance.

Well then, assurance, in such a case, we have proved that a man can have none. But to make a step lower, though there be no assurance, yet may there not be at least a comfortable expectation? and though no certainty, yet a likelihood of recovery?

Why yes, I cannot deny but that in some cases there may. But then we must distinguish of two sorts of temptation, or rather of two ways of entering into it. As,

1st. When a man enters into it purely by his own free choice, no necessary business or circumstance of his life engaging him in it, by unhappily casting the matter of a temptation before him in the course of his lawful occasions.

2dly. When a man meets with a temptation in the pursuit of his honest calling or profession, or in such a condition, as he is unavoidably brought into by an overruling hand of Providence.

These, I say, are the two ways by which men pass into temptation. Concerning the first of which I affirm, that when a man enters into it by his own free choice, putting himself upon needless, adventurous trials, he leads himself into temptation, and so has no cause to rely upon God for a deliverance out of it. And yet I do not, I cannot say, that God will not in the event deliver such a one. But this I say, that such a one has no ground to conclude that he will; and withal, that for the most part he does not. For by thus stepping out of his way he tempts God, and that surely is not the likeliest course to keep the devil from tempting him.

As for the other way by which men pass into temptation,

namely, in the course of their honest calling or profession, or by some overruling providence casting them under such circumstances as may lay some tempting, alluring object before them; I do not doubt but a man in such a case may comfortably and warrantably hope for such assistances from God, as shall carry him safe and successfully through the temptation, be it what it will;* I say, he may have much greater grounds to hope for them in this, than in the former cases, but can say no more; and that a hope so bottomed is so far from being an act of presumption, that it is indeed a lower act of faith, or next to it, and a justifiable dependence upon the power and goodness of him who never by his sole providence brings a good man into temptation, but that sooner or later he also opens a door whereby he may get out of it.

And it is in good earnest a matter of some astonishment, to consider what eminent, what triumphant success, even weak persons have had against such temptations, as they have been next to unavoidably entangled in; and on the other side, what scandalous falls even the strongest and greatest heroes in religion have met with, by entering the lists with their powerful and skilful enemy, before God had called them to the combat. When indeed God thinks fit to call them to it, the battle is his, and the success must needs be answerable. But God is not bound to do miracles, as often as men are pleased to be wanton, and to throw themselves into danger, and thereby create to themselves a necessity, either of a dismal fall, or a miraculous deliverance.

But to illustrate this matter further, I shall give you some instances of the different success which has attended these two ways of entering into temptation.

And first; how came David to fall into so foul a sin as adultery, and Joseph to escape it, though the temptation was much more pressing and importunate upon Joseph than it was upon David? Why, the reason is manifest: David cast himself into it, by indulging himself at that time in a course of idleness and pleasure, and a gross neglect of the duties of his royal office. For in 2 Sam. xi. 1, 2, we find him represented first lazing upon his couch, and then walking upon the roof of his house; and in a word, tarrying at home careless and unactive, and that at the highest time of action; a time when the text remarkably says that kings went out to battle, and when his own armies were in the field, and he himself should have been at the head of them, as became a prince whom God had raised to that high station for nobler ends, than to do his business by others, and assume the glory of it to himself.

On the contrary, Joseph came under the temptation without any precedent act or fault of his own, being forced out of his country, and carried as a slave into Egypt, and there bought and sold; and at length placed in a family, where the devil maliciously

* Consult Sermon xxii. in vol. i., about Prevention of Sin.

laid a snare for him, and he as victoriously broke through it. But had Joseph, out of a vain vagrant humour, travelled into Egypt (as some do into France and other places) only to see the country, and to learn fashions (as the word goes), and in the course of his travels fallen into Potiphar's house, probably he might have given that lewd proposal another kind of entertainment, and while he was learning fashions, not have refused so fashionable a temptation.

Again, how came Moses to be safe amidst all the pleasures and idolatries of Pharaoh's court, and Peter to deny and forswear the Son of God and Saviour of the world in the court of the high-priest, where there was much less danger of forgetting God and himself, than there was in the Egyptian court, a place fraught with all sorts of vice, and without the least favour of God or goodness, virtue or religion? Why, the same reason is to be given for this also: God by a strange providence had placed Moses there, without any consent or concurrence of his own; and accordingly, having brought him thither by his providence, he preserved him there by his grace.

But on the other side; what reason had Peter to thrust himself into the high-priest's hall, where he had nothing to do, and to venture himself into the very mouth of that danger which Christ himself but a few hours before had so expressly warned him of? Why, it was his foolish confidence and curiosity, which betrayed him into that gazing, fatal adventure, which had like to have rifled his soul, and robbed him of his faith, and, without the interposal of a singular grace, had consigned him over to a sad and final apostasy.

Many more such instances might be produced of both sorts; but I suppose these may suffice to convince the sober and considerate, that the same divine assistances which used to be vouchsafed to men in God's way, are not to be expected by them in the devil's walk.

And yet so little is this considered, that I dare avouch, that most of those deadly blows and falls given by the tempter and his temptations to the souls of men, have been from their bold, voluntary, unwarrantable putting themselves upon those trials, which God would otherwise never have put them upon.

And it is wonderful to consider what absurd, senseless pretences some allege for their so doing; three of which I shall briefly mention. As,

1st. Ask some men how they dare make themselves spectators of all that lewdness, and hearers of all that ribaldry, immorality, and profaneness, which is oftentimes seen and heard in some places and companies, and those in no small request neither; and they will tell you, that they do it, forsooth, because they know themselves proof against all impressions from such objects. And do they indeed find themselves so upon experience? Why

yes, just as much as tinder uses to be proof against the sparks which fall upon it. And generally such spiritual braves, upon the first encounter and trial of their strength this way, are quickly taught the contrary, full sore to their cost, seldom coming off but with a baffled confidence and a bleeding conscience, with the shame of one and the guilt of the other.

2dly. Others in the like cases will tell you, that they venture in this manner, to create in themselves a greater and more lively hatred and detestation of such practices, by an actual inspection of the ugliness and deformity of them. Which kind of reasoning is just as if a man should go into a pest-house to learn a remedy against the plague.

But whosoever he is, who shall presume to try the strength and temper of his soul by such venturous, unhallowed courses as these, shall find that God will leave him, and his own purposes will fail him; and the sin which he would pretend to hate, shall smile in his face, and win upon his heart, and by secret encroaches grow upon his spirit, till at length it has crept into, and lodged itself within the very inmost powers of his soul. It being usually with the heart of man and a temptation, as it was with Esau and his brother Jacob; while Esau was marching towards him, he fully proposed to fight him, but as soon as he came to him, he embraced him.

It is a saying worthy to be written in the heart of every man, with the pen of a diamond, Ecclus. iii. 26, that "he who loves danger shall perish by it." And that man who can be so sottishly ignorant of the nature of things, as to think to learn sobriety amongst the debauched, chastity in the stews, modesty at balls and plays, and the like, will quickly come to leave his virtue behind him, and to take the shape and impress of that mould into which such courses and companies have cast him. For there is no such thing as "gathering grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles:" no turning the incentives of vice into the instruments of virtue; or growing holy by a kind of antiperistasis. He who will needs fight the devil at his own weapon, must not wonder if he finds him an overmatch.

3dly. And lastly, there are others again, who run themselves upon these ungodly and fool-hardy adventures, out of an insolent confidence, that in case they should happen to be worsted and foiled in them, they will repent, and that shall salve all, and set them whole and right again: than which confidence nothing can be imagined more absurd and impious: absurd, because a man hereby ventures the greatest interest he has in the world upon something not in his own power: repentance being, upon several accounts, most particularly the gift of God: and surely no man can have cause to expect a gift, nay, the best of gifts from God, while he is actually provoking him. For how can such a wretch assure himself that God will give him either grace to repent by,

or time to repent in? And yet it is certain that there can be no repentance without both, and as certain that a man can give himself neither.

He may perhaps for a while stop the mouth of his crying conscience, with some flattering, fallacious promises of an after amendment. But as it was said to the rich, sottish worldling in the gospel, singing a requiem to his soul, and projecting his future ease upon a survey of his present stores; so may it be said to that man who abuses himself with such false reckonings about his spiritual estate, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee;" and then what will become of all those windy, abortive projects of a future repentance? No doubt, a man may drop into hell in the midst of them; and that will be a sad conviction to him, that repentance is one thing, and a purpose to repent quite another. And so much for the absurdity of this pretence.

And then for the impiety of it. It is of so peculiar a malignity and opposition to the motions of God's Holy Spirit, that whosoever can take heart to sin upon presumption of a following repentance, needs not be much concerned about the issue of any temptation; for he is already under the power of one of the worst and strongest temptations that can possibly befall a man; and carries a heart so utterly contrary to, and estranged from all real sense of piety, that the utmost commission of the sin which he is tempted to can hardly estrange it more.

Such a one is certainly in the very gall of bitterness, and under the most binding fetters that the devil can well hold him by. For of all the devil's engines, this imposture of a future repentance is the chief and most fatally efficacious: and I dare affirm, has sent more souls to hell, than any one thing else whatsoever. Nay the truth is, it is hard to imagine how any man, with his senses about him, could venture upon any deliberate sin without it. For come to a sinner just as he is entering upon the devil's work, and ask him whether he does not know that God has threatened theft, murder, and uncleanness, and the like, with damnation? and he will tell you, Yes. And is not God true and just? Yes. And if so, how dare you venture to commit any of these sins? Then whispers his false heart this secret encouragement in his ear, that repentance shall step in between him and damnation. And so the scene being thus laid, the man goes on, and upon these terms complies with the temptation and commits the sin; and God perhaps, in his just judgment, never gives him grace to repent of it. But this is a subject of so great importance, that it worthily requires a just, entire discourse by itself.

And thus having shown, that, which way soever a man passes into temptation, he can have no antecedent assurance that God will deliver him out of it; no, nor yet in the place, so much as

a probable expectation of such a deliverance, unless the temptation befalls him in the course of his lawful occasions, or by some overruling providence casting him upon it, and not by his own free choice and fault stepping into it; and lastly, since it is certain that men fall into temptation this latter way, at least a hundred times, for once that they fall into it upon the former account: I suppose, there can need no further demonstration of the truth of that other proposition, laid down by me; namely, 'that before a man's entering into temptation, it is much more probable, and that he has greater reason to believe, that being once prevailed upon by it, he shall not be delivered out of it, than that he shall.' Which one thing seriously thought of, and laid to heart, surely one would think should be abundantly enough to alarm any man in his wits, and to keep him out of those fatal by-ways, where the entrance is dangerous, the retreat is doubtful, and the end is death.

And now to sum up this whole argument and discourse in a few words: If the foregoing assertions or propositions be true (as the whole world will never be able to prove them otherwise), let any one of sense and reason, from this consideration, that the mercy of God and the intercession of Christ are engaged to deliver the godly out of temptation, draw a rational argument to venture upon a temptation if he can.

For, first, upon a principle of common gratitude or humanity, will or can any one make mercy itself a motive to sin, and the greatest kindness a provocation to the foulest hostilities? Will a son kick against his father's bowels, only because he knows that they yearn over him? And if this be monstrous and incredible, can we believe that a principle of grace can suggest or endure such reasonings as common humanity would abhor?

Or, in the next place, will a principle of common prudence suffer a man under a capital guilt, to offend, grieve, and affront his advocate? Shall I spit in the face of him who is to plead for my life, and I am a dead man if he does not? And if common sense will and must explode such practices, can a principle of grace, which enlightens the understanding, as well as purifies the heart, carry a man to that which common sense would secure him from? All these are paradoxes in reason and nature, and therefore infinitely more so in religion.

Well, but admit that the enormous strength of a man's corruption should so far overbear all those discourses both of reason and religion, as to make him sin, and then presume upon mercy in spite of them. Why, then it will follow, that such a one has no reason in the earth to reckon himself in the number of the godly and regenerate; to whom alone an interest in those two great benefits does belong: and consequently, that he presumes without any ground. In which case, it is not this, or any other gospel doctrine, but the man's own ignorance and misapplication

of that to himself which he has no claim to, which causes his presumption.

And, therefore, show me that man who can make such cursed inferences from those two high privileges; and I will undertake to demonstrate to him, that those inferences and conclusions are much more effectual arguments to evince, that he has no interest at all in that mercy and that intercession, than they can be to prove that that mercy and that intercession will be employed or concerned to deliver him out of temptation.

For a principle of true grace,—nay, even a probable persuasion,—nay further, a full assurance of that grace, would keep any one from arguing at such a villanous rate. Forasmuch as no man ever attains to such an assurance, but by a long course of piety, and an habitual strict communion with God, and such an eminent controlling degree of grace, as shall render it morally impossible for a person so qualified, to make such horrid conclusions.

But the truth is, error and a wicked mind will draw poison out of any thing, and turn the choicest benefits and the richest cordials of the gospel into gall and hemlock. But for all that, God is not mocked, though men love to be deceived. Nor are the means of salvation at all the less so, because some abuse them to their destruction. I am sure we have all cause to pray, that God would keep us from so dangerous a delusion in so great a concern.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON IV.

PART III.

DELIVERANCE FROM TEMPTATION, WHY TO BE REPUTED A GREAT MERCY.

2 Peter ii. 9.

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.

I have twice already discoursed upon this text; in which, after some short explication and account given, both of the sense and design of the words, I cast the further prosecution of them under these following particulars.

I. To show how far God delivers persons truly pious out of temptation.

II. To show what is the grand motive or impulsive cause inducing God thus to deliver them. And,

III. And lastly, to show why and upon what grounds this is to be reputed so great a mercy and so transcendent a privilege.

The first two of these I have formerly treated of, and proceed now to

III. The third and last; which is to show *why and upon what grounds deliverance out of temptation is to be reputed so great a mercy and so transcendent a privilege.*

In order to which, as all deliverance, in the very nature and notion of it, imports a relation to some evil, from which a man is delivered; so in this deliverance out of temptation, the surpassing greatness of it, and the sovereign mercy shown in it, will appear from those intolerable evils and mischiefs, which are always intended by, and naturally consequents upon a prevailing temptation. To give some account of which shall be the business of our present discourse.

And for this, we shall first in general lay down this as a certain truth: That all the mischief that sin can possibly do a man, temptation designs him. All that is valuable, either in this world or the next, it would rob him of; and all that can be called misery, either here or hereafter, it would subject him to. All that a man can enjoy is struck at, and all that a man can suffer is intended; and if the tempter allows him the quiet enjoyment of any thing desirable in this life, it is only to bereave him of that which is infinitely more so in the other.

Which being so, as to that high concern in debate between the devil and the souls of men; since his malice is such, that he cannot but tempt, it is an infinite mercy that he can do no more than tempt, and that a man's own consent must be had to his own destruction. For if the tempter could have his will upon the person he tempted, he would scorn to court where he could compel. He would make directly at his head, and not come stealing upon his heel. He would break in upon him with open force, and not stand poorly waiting at his elbow with a temptation.

But to come to particulars, four things more especially are designed and driven at by the tempter in all his temptations. As,

1. To begin with the greatest, and that which is always first intended, though last accomplished, *the utter loss and damnation of the soul.* For this is the grand mark which the tempter shoots at, this being the beloved prize which he contends so hard for.

And as two enemies may be really as much enemies while they are treating as when they are fighting, so the devil bears the same malice to a man while he tempts him, as when he actually torments him. Temptation is the way to torment, and torment the end of temptation.

When men first venture upon sinful objects, lewd converse, and occasions of life suitable to their corrupt humours, the face of the temptaion looks fair and harmless, the first proposals of it plausible and modest, and the last and dismal issue of things is with great art and care kept out of their sight; so that they shall not perceive that their enemy is so much as about to strike, till the final and fatal stroke is effectually given.

The devil perhaps offers thee pleasure; but, poor creature! it is thy life which he aims at, thy darling life which he is driving a base bargain for. Or he may lay wealth and riches before thee, but be assured he will have something for his money, something of more value to thee than both the Indies, and the whole world besides. Sometimes he courts with honour and greatness, but still expects to be well paid for both. And as great a prince as he is, he never knights any one, but he expects more than knight's service from him in return. In a word, he will have thy conscience and thy religion by way of earnest here, and thy soul in full payment for it hereafter. There is not the least thing in the world which the tempter offers a man for nothing; not so much as a pitiful mess or morsel to relieve thy craving, starving appetites, but he will, if he can, have thy birth-right, thy immortal birth-right in exchange for it.

Could we but look into those mansions of horror, where he has lodged so many millions of lost souls, the cruel monuments of his victorious delusions, and whom almost amongst them all, might we not hear charging his coming into that woeful estate upon the overreaching arts of this great impostor! Some we should hear cursing those false and fallacious pleasures which

had baited and beguiled, befooled and drawn them into those direful pains, from which there is neither respite nor redemption. Others we should hear raving and crying out of those guilty gains, those ill-filled bags and deluding heaps, which served only to treasure up wrath to the owners of them, and at length sink them into a bottomless pit, deeper and more insatiable, if possible, than their own covetousness. Others again we should hear, with the height of rage and bitterness, reflecting upon those treacherous dear-bought honours, the unconscionable price of their wretched souls, by which the tempter hooked them into his clutches, blinding the judgment and blasting their innocence, till by several steps of guilt and greatness, he *preferred them downwards* to the place prepared for such forlorn grandees, where they are like to lie for ever, cursing themselves as much as formerly they were cursed by others.

This is the result and end of all the tempter's glossing arts and flattering addresses. Hell is the centre of all his temptations; for from thence they were first drawn, there they all meet, and in that they end.

And therefore let not that man, who would be fooled in so vast an interest as his salvation, fix his eye either upon the outside or beginning of a temptation. Even the beginning of a tragedy is pleasant, but the close of it is not so. Let him not judge of what the tempter intends by what he offers; for be it what it will, look it never so gay or great, can any one, not quite abandoned by common sense, imagine that this mortal avowed enemy is at all concerned for his pleasure, profit, or preferment? Assuredly nothing less; in all this he is but setting his trap, and no man sets a trap but he baits it too. He hates most implacably, while he offers most plausibly. His drift in every one of his temptations is to separate between the soul and its chief good for ever, and to plunge it into a state of misery both intolerable and unchangeable.

Further than this he cannot go, and short of this, if possible, he never stops. Every temptation, not defeated, certainly destroys: for by once casting a man from his innocence, it carries him still downwards, and he who falls so falls further and further by a continual rolling motion, and never leaves falling (unless stayed by a mighty intervening grace) till he comes to the bottom, or rather to the place that has none.

This is the natural course, way, and method of a temptation from first to last. In the beginning it flatters, in the progress of it it domineers, and in the issue it damns; always concluding (if not baffled and broken off in time) in "the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched."

But to proceed. There are other consequences of a successful, conquering temptation, short of damnation, and yet sufficiently dreadful in themselves. As,

2. In the second place, *loss of a man's peace with God*, and his own conscience, and the weakening if not extinguishing all his former hopes of salvation. It confounds and casts a man infinitely backwards, as to his spiritual accounts. It degrades him from his assurance; renders his title to heaven dubious and perplexed; draws a great and discouraging blot over all his evidences; and even shakes in pieces that confidence, which was formerly the very life and support of his soul, with new, terrible, and amazing objections.

This is a man's condition immediately upon the prevalence of a temptation; for whatsoever makes a breach upon his innocence, in the same degree also certainly dashes his comforts. And for a man to be thus always in the dark, as to the greatest concern he has in both worlds, what is it but a kind of temporary hell, as hell itself is chiefly a perpetual darkness! And therefore, where men cannot arrive to the high privilege of a certainty, they are glad at least of a probability of their salvation. But he who has once rifled and laid open his soul to a base compliance with a temptation, has nothing to relieve his tottering, shaken hopes with, but the weak and glimmering light of God's general mercy, which many enjoy, who shall never taste of his special favour.

Look upon David, a person represented under as sublime and heroic a character of piety to posterity, as any one whatsoever; a person signalized with that peculiar elogy, of being "the man after God's own heart," 1 Sam. xiii. 14. And yet how did this glorious and great man, by yielding to a foul temptation, undermine and sap the very foundation of all that comfort and confidence in God, which by a long course of piety and strict living, he had for many years together been building up? so that immediately after that terrible blow given him, we find the horror of his sin and the terrors of the Almighty always fresh and fierce upon his spirit. "My sin," says he, "is continually before me," Ps. li. 3. Nay, though he received his pardon by a particular message from heaven, a pardon bearing date as early as the very confession of his sin (for no sooner had he said, "I have sinned," but the prophet replies upon him immediately from God himself, 2 Sam. xii. 13, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die"), yet notwithstanding all this, the wound hereby made upon his conscience was so broad and deep, so angry and inflamed, that we cannot find that it was ever perfectly cured and closed up; but still we have him complaining of broken bones and noisome sores, loss of God's presence and decay of spiritual strength, mournful days and restless nights; sometimes rising and sometimes falling, with alternate hopes and fears, even to his dying day.

The history of whose condition one would think abundantly sufficient to set a frightful look upon the fairest and best-dressed temptation. For though in such a case God by a sovereign restoring mercy should at the last secure a man's eternal interest,

and keep him from a hell hereafter, yet is it not misery enough to endure one here? to be still carrying about him a sick, ulcerated mind, a mind perpetually almost harassed with the returning paroxysms of diffidence and despair? and to go drooping all his days under the secret girds and gripes of a dissatisfied, doubting, ill-boding conscience?

Is it nothing to be haunted with the dismal apparitions of a reviving guilt, and the old black scores of our past forgotten sins? Nothing to have that merciless "hand-writing of the law against us," which we thought had been cancelled, presented anew in fresh and flaming characters to our apprehensions? In a word, is it nothing to be always walking upon the brink of damnation, like a man looking down with horror into a deep and black water from a slippery standing, from which he expects trembling to fall every minute, and from which, if he does fall, he sees his death and his grave before him in the bosom of the merciless element, where he is sure to be swallowed up irrecoverably?

A man may have the whole frame of his spiritual estate so broken and battered by a temptation, that he shall never be able to retrieve upon his heart so much rational confidence of his future happiness, as to afford him one cheerful day all his life after; but shall pass the time of his pilgrimage here in sadness and uncertainty, clouds and darkness, clouds that shall make all black and lowering over him, and intercept the view of all that is comfortable above him.

Such, for the most part, is the case and condition of a sinner plunged by temptation into a great guilt; a condition so inexpressibly miserable, that it is impossible for a man under it to enjoy any thing. And that surely is or ought to be argument enough against it, though he should in the issue escape from it. For a wise man would live, not only with safety, but also with satisfaction.

And therefore, as in this temporal life it is not the bare union of soul and body, or a power merely to subsist and breathe, which deserves the name of life, and much less of enjoyment; but to have those nobler superstructures and advantages of nature, a healthful body and a sound mind, vigorous faculties and well-disposed organs, together with a happy symmetry and agreement of all the parts. So in the spiritual and supernatural life, will any one who has a true sense and relish of such things, content himself with so poor a proportion of grace and sincerity, as just to keep him spiritually alive, and out of a state of death and reprobation, and in the mean time neglect the health, the growth, the flower and activity of the spiritual principle? Will he satisfy himself in having just as much oil in his lamp as to keep it from going out, when he might and should have so much as to feed it up to a brisk and a glorious flame?

Why should a man choose to go to heaven through sloughs

and ditches, briars and thorns, diffidence and desertion, trembling and misgiving, and by the very borders of hell, and death staring him in the face; when he might pass from comfort to comfort, and have all his way paved with joy and assurance, and made easy and pleasant to him by the inward invaluable satisfactions of a well-grounded peace?

He who shuns the road of temptation, may do so; but he who will needs keep in it, is at best but like the man in the gospel, who travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, "fell amongst thieves. They stripped him, and wounded him, and left him half dead." After which, would any one, think we, in his right wits, who had seen all this, have ventured himself into the same hands, only because the man who fell into them was not actually despatched by them? Do wise men account the dangers and disasters of war as nothing, because every one who engages in the battle is not killed out-right upon the place, but many escape and come off wounded and maimed, and leaving a good part of themselves behind them?

Surely I should think, that not only graves, but hospitals, not only the enemy, but the surgeon, not only the weapons of death, but the instruments of cure, should speak terror enough, to dissuade considering minds from the peril of such adventures.

But much otherwise is the discourse and arguing of those whom the tempter infatuates; when in defiance of common sense and experience, they would reason away the dread of sin and the danger of temptation. They reason for the commission of a sin from the bare possibility of not being damned for it, but overlook the certainty of being made extremely wretched and miserable by it: just like a sot, who purchases the short, worthless pleasure of a luscious, unwholesome morsel with a terrible surfeit or a long sickness, only because a man may be sick and surfeited, and not die. These are the wise consequences which some govern their actions by; while, by a new unusual art of argumentation, they dispute for the devil, but conclude against themselves.

3. The third consequent of a prevailing temptation, is *the exposing of a man to the temporal judgments of God* in some signal and severe affliction. For though in much mercy God may, as we have shown, save such a one from eternal death; yet it rarely happens, that he frees him both from destruction and from discipline too; but that some time or other, he gives him a taste of the bitter cup, and teaches him what his sin has deserved, by what at present it makes him feel.

When the Israelites, by that monstrous instance of ingratitude and idolatry, in changing the Deity for a golden calf,—the God that made them, for a god made by them,—had provoked God utterly to cut them off; and Moses by a mighty intercession kept off the killing blow, so that they were not then

destroyed: yet for all that they did not go unpunished; as appears from that remarkable place in Exodus xxxii. 34, "Nevertheless," says God, "in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them." And by many terrible items did the vengeance of God remind them of it, for many succeeding generations. So that it was a common saying, even to a proverb amongst the Jewish writers, that never any judgment befell the children of Israel from that time forward, but there was an ounce of the golden calf in it.

It seems there was an old score still be reckoned for. As the killing malignity of many a distemper may be removed, and yet the man not absolutely cured of it, but that for many years after he may find it in his bones, and never recover the debauches of his youth so far, but that they may leave something behind them which shall be sure to rub up his memory in his age.

Some there are who hold, that when God has once pardoned a sin, as to its guilt and merit of eternal punishment, there is yet another guilt, binding the sinner over to temporal punishment, which remains yet unpardoned, and consequently to be expiated and cleared off, either by God's temporal judgments inflicted upon the sinner before or after his death, or to be satisfied for by something voluntarily undergone, or otherwise commuted for by the sinner himself.

This I say is the doctrine of some. A doctrine much more beneficial in its consequences, than true in its principles; and such as maintains those who hold it much better than it is maintained by them. For though it is most true, that after God has pardoned a sin as to its eternal punishment, he may nevertheless afflict and chastise the sinner for it in this world: yet to affirm that this is in order to the satisfaction of his justice for that sin, is false, and inconsistent with the infinite fulness and perfection of Christ's satisfaction.

All satisfaction implies recompence and an equal compensation; but God intends no such thing in the calamities which he inflicts upon a pardoned person: but he inflicts them for quite other ends; as partly to give the world fresh demonstrations of his hatred of sin, and partly to inodiate and embitter sin to the chastised sinner. So that to punish, properly taken, is one thing; and to afflict and chastise, perfectly another.

The difference therefore in stating the ground or formal reason of this dispensation is very great, though the effect of it be materially the same, and the evil inflicted, whether by way of retribution or castigation, equally grievous. And since it is so, let no man from any, even the most rational persuasion that he can have of the main and final pardon of his sin, conclude that there shall be no other reckonings with him in temporal visitations. For he who has escaped the axe or the gallows is not sure also to escape the lash: and though mercy has spared a

malefactor's head, yet justice may leave him a small token in his hand to remember it by.

For the proof and confirmation of which, can any thing be more apposite and express than that emphatical place in Psalm xcix. 8, "Thou wast a God," says the psalmist, "who forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." What! forgiveness and vengeance upon the same persons! light and darkness in the same region and at the same time! Who can unriddle these obscurities, or reconcile the seeming contradiction? Why, the resolution is not so very difficult, if we consider that eternal mercy may very well consist with temporal severities, and the pardon of the sin with the correction of the sinner.

See this further exemplified in the person of David himself, the great instance whom we shall still have recourse to, in treating of this subject. Could or can any one act a higher repentance than he did, whose repentance stands upon record as a pattern to the penitents of all succeeding ages? Or can any one pretend to a greater assurance of his forgiveness, than the same David, whose pardon, as we have shown, was immediately sealed in heaven, and infallibly declared to him by the mouth of an inspired prophet? yet, for all this, cast but your eyes forward, and certainly from that time, you will find but very few fair days in the following part of his life. For first of all, he hears the doom of his darling child; and then by a strange intermixture of judgments and pardons together, in the very same breath almost that the prophet tells him that he should not die, he tells him also, that the sword should never depart from his house. And how was his royal family broken and dishonoured by strange, infamous, and unusual villanies and disasters; by incest, murder, and rebellion; one brother ravishing his sister, another killing his brother and rebelling against his father. Surely there was as sad a face of confusion upon the house of David as ever there was, not only upon the court of any prince, but upon the family of any private person whatsoever. And yet all these lamentable accidents were both subsequent upon, and derivable from a sin which was fully pardoned. Of so vast, lasting, and so surviving an extent is the malignity of a great guilt.

And no wonder; for as guilt is inseparable from sin, so sorrow and suffering are inseparable from guilt. "Tribulation and anguish," says the apostle, "upon every soul of man that doeth evil." The sentence is universal, and we find no reserve or exempt case in the execution. And therefore let that man, who can be so far taken and transported with the present, pleasing offers of a temptation, as to overlook those dreadful after-claps, which usually bring up the rear of it; let him, I say, take heed that vengeance does not begin with him in this life, and mark him in the forehead with some fearful unlooked-for disaster. And if

this once comes to be the case, I cannot see, but that those high blades, who pretend to outbrave hell, and laugh at all apprehensions of future misery, yet when they come to feel the hand of God upon their worldly interests, can as sadly and sharply resent the calamity of a languishing body or a declining family, a blasted name or a broken estate, and bend under it as poorly as the meanest and lowest spirited man whatsoever.

But let them bear it as they can; such for the most part are the dolorous effects and bitter appendages of a prevailing temptation. After all which, if pardoning mercy should come in, and save a man at the last, yet surely no serious, considering person would need any greater argument against the commission of a sin, than to have these the circumstances of its pardon.

4. The fourth and last mischievous consequence of a prevailing temptation, is *the disgrace, scandal, and reproach*, which it naturally brings upon our Christian profession. The three former consequences terminated within the compass of the sinner's own person; but this last spreads and diffuses the mischief much further: nothing in nature casting so deep a stain upon the face of Christianity, as the blots which fall upon it from the lewd and scandalous behaviour of Christians.

Forasmuch as every ill practice naturally reflects a disrepute upon a man's principles, as being still supposed either to influence him to that practice, or at least not to restrain him from it; either of which is justly a discredit to them. For if the first be true, his principles are evil and immoral; if the latter, they are imperfect.

From whence it is, that constant experience has found it to be the common course and custom of the world, to except and inveigh against professions, offices, and things themselves, only for the faults of persons. A way of arguing indeed as absurd as spiteful; but yet very easy and usual, and with gross vulgar minds (not well able to distinguish or discern any thing, but as it is exemplified and embodied in persons) almost unavoidable.

And this certainly should make every wise and good man very tender and cautious of being drawn into those ways, which may both bring upon him a personal guilt, and render him a public scandal. For why, in all reason, should the profession or society, the church or religion, which a man is of, suffer by his lewdness, or share the infamy of those crimes which they are not in the least concerned in, otherwise than to disown, hate, and detest them? Common ingenuity, one would think, should stop the foul mouth of any temptation, with such reasonings and replies as these.

Nay, should a man take up his religion, not out of conscience, but design, yet surely it would be his interest to keep it fair and creditable: and should he (as too many do) wear it only as a cloak;

yet prudence and common decency would teach him to wear it clean, and without spots. For he who is not concerned for the honour of his religion, may justly be supposed to have neither honour nor religion.

If indeed a man could be wicked and a villain to himself alone, the mischief would be so much the more tolerable. But the case is much otherwise: the plague flies abroad, and attacks the innocent neighbourhood: the guilt of the crime lights upon one, but the example of it sways a multitude; especially if the criminal be of any note or eminence in the world. For the fall of such a one by any temptation (be it never so plausible) is like that of a principal stone or stately pillar, tumbling from a lofty edifice into the deep mire of the street: it does not only plunge and sink into the black dirt itself, but also dashes and bespatters all that are about it or near it when it falls.

Was it not thus with Samson? who, of a judge of Israel, and a terror to his enemies, a man all made up of miracle, rendered himself both the shame of the former and the contempt of the latter; a scoff and a by-word to all the nations round about him (as every vicious and voluptuous prince must needs be); and all this by surrendering up his strength, his reason, and his royal trust to the charms of a brutish temptation, which quickly transformed and made him a more stupendous miracle of folly and weakness than ever he had been of strength; and a greater disgrace to his country than ever he had been a defence; or in a word, from a judge of Israel, a woful judgment upon it.

And was it not thus also with David? This was the worst and most killing consequence of the temptation which he fell by; 2 Sam. xii. 14, that he had, by that enormous act, "given the enemies of God," as the prophet told him, "great occasion to blaspheme." And no doubt, the religion he professed, as well as the sin he had committed, was thereupon made "the song of the drunkards;" and many a biting jeer was obliquely cast at one, as well as directly levelled at the other. For to be vicious in the sight of a man's enemies, and those not more the enemies of himself than of his religion, what a bitter aggravation is it of his guilt, and what an indelible reproach to his person!

Yet thus it is and ever will be in such cases: where the person of the criminal is public, the infamy of the crime can hardly be private. It is too great and too diffusive to be confined to one place, or circumscribed within one person. But the report of it shall whirl and rattle over a whole nation, damping the spirits of some, and rejoicing the hearts of others, but opening the mouths of all; those of enemies in taunts and sarcasms, and those of friends in sighs and complaints; when it shall be said of any person of credit and repute, what a false or foul step he made, either in point of conscience or honour, throwing off all obligation of one and all sense of the other, only through a blind aspiring ascent to some pitiful station of worldly wealth and

greatness, where the curse of men will be sure to follow, and the curse of God to overtake him.

These two things therefore, let every one rest assured and persuaded of. First, that in every temptation, the tempter's design is not only the single guilt and damnation of the person tempted, but, if possible, to make him a means or instrument to carry and convey the infection of the crime to many more. And if he fails in that, so that he cannot defile or destroy persons, he will endeavour at least to derive a slur upon professions. This being most certain, that there is not a man of remark, in any religion in the world, but has thereby got it into his power to do his religion a great mischief. To which I shall add one note more; that every man living has it in his power to do more mischief than he can do good. And this directly introduces that other thing, which I would have every man fix and keep in his thoughts; namely, that it is the most unworthy, base, and ignoble thing, that can be incident to human nature, for a man to make himself a plague and a public calamity, a blot to a church and a blemish to his religion. For what is it else, but to make himself a tool and an under-agent to the great enemy of God and man, and to do that for the devil, which the devil, without the help of such instruments, could not possibly do by himself.

But such a wretch is every one, who, by complying with a temptation in any vile or dishonest practice, does as much as in him lies to libel his very calling, to reproach his Saviour, and to put Christianity itself to the blush. But above all, scandalous and inexcusable would it be for a minister of the church, to suffer himself to be tempted to any thing wicked or dishonourable. For such a one, by so doing, first puts his foot into the mire, and then tramples upon the altar.

And thus having set before you four of the most dire and fatal consequences of a prevailing temptation, I suppose it will be no hard matter to take an estimate of the greatness of the mercy of being delivered from it.

For first, is there any happiness in being free from the cruel bites and tortures of a perpetually accusing conscience; a conscience labouring under the guilt of some great sin, which, like a remorseless vulture, shall lie daily and hourly gnawing and preying upon his heart; or like a poisonous adder, rolling in his bosom, and from thence always hissing in his face?

Is it a blessing to be secured from poverty and sickness, infamy and disgrace, and all the terrible lashes of an angry, provoked vengeance, which are able to make life itself all anguish, horror, and astonishment, and death, in respect of it, a relief and a sanctuary to fly to?

Is it a mercy to be kept clear and innocent, and to be preserved from such courses and practices as shall render a man a public nuisance and a common grievance, the abhorrence of the age he lives in, and the detestation and curse of the ages after him?

And lastly, is it not an act of a superlative, divine goodness and compassion, to hinder a man from running headlong into a state of final and eternal perdition? a state of judgment without mercy, where there is no repentance, and from whence there is no return. A state of torment and despair; torment which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive." I say, let a man rally up his best attention, his severest and exactest thoughts, and let him consider and weigh these things, each of them in particular, and all of them together, the misery of enduring, and the felicity of escaping them; and then he shall be able to comprehend, or at least to adore the height and depth, the compass and dimensions of that mercy which delivers him from temptation.

And now, to make some useful inference and deduction from the whole foregoing discourse: what can we so naturally and so happily improve it into, as into this one great, important lesson? namely, that let men's desires, hopes, and designs be never so big and swelling, and their fancy for the world and the things of the world never so fond and eager; yet that doubtless is and ought to be accounted by the truly pious and prudent, the best condition and state of life (be it what it will) which shall least expose them to temptation. For if the end of any course or condition be destructive, the way to it certainly must needs be dangerous.

It is the general aim and desire of men to be rich and great, and to live with ease, plenty, and honour, and to be their own carvers for all these things; and when they can be so, they think themselves happy men. But as the king of Israel said to his insulting enemy, 1 Kings xx. 11, "Let not him who girdeth on his armour boast as he who putteth it off;" so say I in the case now before us: let no present fluster of fortune, or flow of riches, either transport the man himself with confidence, or the fools about him with admiration, till we see that it makes him better and wiser than he was before (which seldom happens), and not only makes, but steadily keeps him so, till he has finished his course by a well-led life, and closed his eyes by an honourable and happy death.

Otherwise, let his first setting out be as bright and glorious as the rising sun, many a black cloud may gather over him, and many a furious storm fall upon him, which shall bring him beaten and battered with a *Non putavi* (the fool's motto) in his mouth, to a sad and doleful journey's end; and then he will find, when he has once felt it, that it is no such strange thing, for a fair morning and a foul evening to fall on the same day.

This is certainly true of things, as well as persons: that performances rarely keep pace with promises; and that what flatters us most at first, generally in the issue befriends us least. And nothing in nature serves a man so more than his own heart. Oh! if I might have such an estate! how happy should I be! says one: and if I might attain to such honour, such high place

and favour, how should I enjoy myself! says another. But, thou ignorant man! dost thou know what thou shouldest be if under such and such circumstances? Dost thou carry thy heart so absolutely in thy hand, as to be sure to keep it firm and fixed, and faithful to thee, when the world and the tempter shall break in upon it, with riches to bribe, pleasure to court, and greatness to bewitch it, and all to debauch and draw it from thee, so that it shall be no longer thine, to bestow upon God and goodness, justice or religion? For alas! there is no such thing as being wicked to a measure, or playing the knave to a certain degree, and no further. This being, as the comedian says, *dare operam, ut cum ratione insanias.*

And therefore he who ventures upon any unlawful or suspicious practice, or supposed advantage, on such terms, is like a man who goes into the water for his pleasure or refreshment: his design, to be sure, is to divert, not to destroy himself, and accordingly with great caution he enters in step by step; but the rapid stream presently draws him in, carries him away, and hurries him down violently, and so the poor man with all his art and caution is drowned. He thought to have been too wise and skilful for the stream, but the stream proved too strong for him.

In the concerns of the soul, as well as of the body, it is a dangerous thing for a man to venture beyond his depth. Since it is not in men as it is in waters, which are always as deep as they are high. For in persons, experience shows that height and shallowness may consist very well together.

But to draw towards a close. If that state or condition of life be undoubtedly the best, which is least subject to temptation, then this may afford us these two following directions.

1st. Let no man in his prayers peremptorily importune God for any particular enjoyment or state of life; that is, let him not pry and prescribe to God in the same petition. God alone knows what will help and what will hurt us. He only can discern the various windings and turnings, the peculiar bent and constitution of the heart, and how this or that thing would affect or work upon it, and how far such or such a condition would agree or disagree with it. He knows the proper suitableness and unsuitableness of every state of life to each mind and temper, which it is hardly possible for the ablest and deepest heads to have a perfect knowledge of. For such very often pray for they know not what, even for their own bane and ruin, and with equal importunity and ignorance solicit their own destruction. They think they ask for bread, but it proves a stone; and for a fish, but they find and feel it to be a serpent; and therefore it is oftentimes in mere love to their persons that God answers not their prayers. In a word, the wisest man living is not wise enough to choose for himself, and therefore we have cause to fly to an infinite wisdom to direct our request, as well as to an infinite goodness to supply our wants.

2dly. As a man is by no means positively to request or pray for any particular enjoyment or state of life, so ought he with the greatest satisfaction of mind to accept of and acquiesce in that state and condition (whatsoever it be) which Providence shall think fit to allot and set out for him. I have already shown that no man living is in this case fit to choose for himself. And if we refer it to God to choose for us, surely there is all the reason in the world that we should stand to his choice. We come all as suppliants, or rather as beggars to the throne of grace; and to beg and to choose too, we know is too much. Is thy condition in the world poor, thy circumstances low, and thy fortune, in the eyes of all about thee, mean and contemptible? Repine not at it; for do we not every day beg of God not to lead us into temptation? And shall we not allow him to judge which is the best and surest way to keep us from it? Possibly this very thing that thou complainest of, is that by which God is effectually answering that prayer.

He denies thee honour, but it is perhaps because he intends thee heaven. He refuses thee greatness, but it may be to preserve thy innocence, and perchance, in long run, thy neck too. In a word, he withholds that from thee, which he knows thy spiritual strengths are not able to bear. Thou affectest to be high and powerful, and probably the tempter, who hates thee mortally, would be glad to have thee so too. But God, who thoroughly knows and truly loves thee, knows, that instead of being high or powerful, it is much better for thee to be harmless and safe.

And if there be any truth in the gospel, and all religion be not made up of tricks and lies, it is really better and more eligible for a man to keep a good conscience, though with a halter about his neck, or a dagger at his throat, than with the loss of it to gain all the riches, and glories, and kingdoms of this world, which the tempter heretofore so liberally offered our Saviour, and our Saviour so resolutely and disdainfully threw back in his face.

In fine, we have nothing to do, but to commit ourselves to God "as to a faithful Creator;" to receive what he assigns us humbly, and to enjoy it thankfully, knowing, that by denying us these gaudy nothings, those gilded poisons, he is doing us the greatest kindness in the world, which (in answer to the Lord's prayer) is to "keep us from temptation;" and by keeping us from temptation, to "deliver us from evil;" and by delivering us from evil, to prepare and fit us for all the good that can be prayed for, and for himself, the endless inexhaustible Fountain of it; "in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, throughout all ages and generations. Amen.

SERMON V.

PART IV.

THE HAPPINESS OF BEING KEPT FROM THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION.

Rev. iii. 10.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, therefore will I keep thee from the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world, to try the inhabitants of the earth.

As deliverance out of temptation is undoubtedly one of the greatest mercies that God vouchsafes his people in this world, so there is nothing that more enhances and sets off the greatness of the mercy, than the critical time of God's vouchsafing it. The wise man assures us, that there is "a time for every thing and purpose under heaven;" a time which gives it a peculiar and proper advantage above what it has at other times. And therefore, since the said advantage is universal, and extends to all kinds of action, we must not wonder if the great enemy of souls has his time also, his particular advantageous time to tempt and destroy, as God has his time to rescue and deliver. But as in the vicissitudes of night and day, the darkness of one recommends the returns of the other, adding a kind of lustre even to light itself, so it is the hour of danger which sets a price and value upon the hour of deliverance, and makes it more properly in season. "It shall be given you," says our Saviour to his disciples, "in that very hour," Matt. x. 19, in the very point and crisis of their extremity; like a pardon intervening just as the fatal arm is lifting up; a pardon sent in the very instant of execution. And certainly next to life from the dead, is to be near the killing stroke, and yet snatched away from it; to see death brought to our very doors, and yet prevented from coming in.

The occasion of the words is indeed particular, as containing in them a prediction of the sad and calamitous estate of the church under the approaching reign of Trajan the Roman emperor; but I shall not consider them under any such particular respect or limitation, but as they hold forth a general important lesson or admonition of equal and perpetual use to all men, with reference to those spiritual trials, conflicts, and temptations, which will be sure to exercise and engage them in the course of their Christian warfare; and accordingly, I shall cast the prosecution of the words under these four particulars.

I. I shall show that there is a certain proper season, or hour, which gives a peculiar force and efficacy to temptation.

II. I shall show by what means, helps, and advantages, a temptation attains its proper season or hour.

III. I shall show some signs, marks, or diagnostics, whereby we may discern when it has actually attained it.

IV. And lastly, draw some useful inferences from the whole.

I. And for the first of these, *that there is a certain proper season, or hour, which gives a peculiar force, strength, and efficacy to temptation.* It is observed in all those actions or passages which cause any great and notable change, either in the mind or life of man, that they do not constantly operate at the same rate of efficacy, but that there is a certain crisis, or particular season, which strangely provokes and draws forth the activity and force of every agent, raising it to effects much greater and higher than the common measure of its actings is observed to carry it to.

So that if we would take a true estimate of the full power of any operative principle, we must consider it under its proper advantages of working, and in those critical seasons, which will be sure to employ, heighten, and call forth the utmost strength and energy that it is naturally possessed of. Every fit of a burning fever is not equally dangerous to the sick person; nor are all hours during the distemper equally fatal. But we usually say, that if the man passes such a day, or such a turn of the moon, the danger is over, forasmuch as at those particular seasons the distemper rallies together all its malignity, and vents the height of its rage; after which, it breaks and declines, and nature begins to recover itself.

In like manner there is a determinate proper time, sometimes called in scripture "the day of temptation," Psalm xcv. 8; sometimes "the evil day," Eph. vi. 13; and sometimes (as here in the text, and elsewhere) remarkably, "the hour of temptation." A time in which temptation is infinitely more fierce and daring, more urgent and impetuous, than at other times. A time in which with all its might it comes rushing in upon the soul, like the *fluctus decumanus* upon the labouring ship or vessel, which always gives it the greatest and most dangerous shock.

We know our Saviour conversed freely and safely with the Jews for a considerable time, coming into the temple, and teaching in their synagogues, and they "stretched forth no hands against him," as he himself tells us, Luke xxii. 53: and yet all this while, as quiet as they held their hands, they had malice enough working in their hearts, and opportunity enough to have exerted that malice in their actions. Nevertheless for that time they touched him not.

But how then came the devil and his instruments to have so much power at length as to apprehend, and seize, and put him to

a cruel ignominious death? Why, our Saviour gives us the reason of it in the next words: "This," says he, "is their hour, and the power of darkness." Accordingly, Mark xiv. 35, we have him praying, that "if it were possible the hour might pass from him." And again, ver. 41: "The hour is come, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

And it is worth observing, that though our Saviour began his great office and ministry with temptations (Matt. iv. 1), and carried it on under temptations ("Ye are those," says he to his disciples, "who have continued with me in my temptations," Luke xxii. 28), yet the scripture records not his praying in his own person against any temptation, but only this last and great one, this "hour of temptation," this terrible and critical hour, in which it pleased the all-wise God to let loose all the powers of hell upon him, and in which they spit the utmost of their venom, and summoned all their hellish arts and forces to give one mighty push for all. And it was the behaviour of Christ at this hour, upon which depended the eternal happiness or misery of mankind, and the vast moments of the world's redemption.

And as it was with Christ himself, who did and suffered every thing as a public person, and consequently was tempted as well as crucified for us; so it will be with every Christian in the world. Christ vouchsafed to be like us in most things, and we shall certainly be like him in this.

And from this consideration no doubt it is, that we must gather the true sense and exposition of that noted place, James iv. 7, in which the apostle bids us "resist the devil, and he will fly from us." But experience sufficiently shows, that upon every act of resistance he does not fly, but that his assaults are frequent, and oftentimes continue very long; nay, the frequency of the onset and the length of the siege are usually some of the principal methods by which he conquers and brings the soul to a surrender. And if so, what can that particular kind of resistance be which proves so victorious, and sends him going like a vanquished person? Why, no question it must be eminently that which withstands and encounters him at that particular hour or season, in which the temptation is come to a head, and in which it has all the helps and advantages for conquest imaginable.

For if the tempter miscarries in this his highest, his sharpest, and most violent attack, it is natural to conceive that he must surcease the conflict, draw off, and give it over, for that time at least. For if his twenty thousands prevail not, to what purpose can it be for him to carry on the war with ten? or what should an enemy do more, who has already done his utmost? And thus much for the first thing proposed, which was to show that there is a certain proper season, or hour, which gives a peculiar force, strength, and efficacy to temptation. I proceed now to

II. The second, which is to show, *by what means, helps, and advantages, a temptation attains its proper season or hour.* And for this I shall mention seven, beginning at the more remote, and so proceeding to such as bring it still nearer and nearer to a head. And,

1. For that which is most remote, but yet the very source and ground-work of all the mischief which the devil either does or can do to the souls of men; namely, that original, universal corruption of man's nature, that *fomes peccati*, containing in it the seeds and first principles of all sins whatsoever, and more or less disposing a man to the commission of them. For it is this which administers the first materials for the tempter to work upon, and without which it is certain that he could do nothing. For when he set upon our Saviour with all his rage and subtlety, yet still he was worsted and beaten off; and the reason of it is assigned by our Saviour himself, in those words in John xiv. 30, "The prince of this world," says he, "cometh, and hath nothing in me;" that is, nothing for any of his temptations to fasten upon. The infinite purity of his nature, free from the least inherent filth, afforded no handle for the tempter to lay hold of him by. He was like pure fountain-water in a glass, which you may shake and shake, as much and as often as you will, but no shaking of it can ever foul it. On the contrary, let a liquor in any vessel look never so clear and transparent upwards, yet if there be the least settlement, or heterogeneous matter in any part of it, shake it thoroughly, and it will be sure to show itself.

In like manner when the tempter comes to any of us, he knows that there is something lurking in the heart of the very best of men, which he can make foul work with, if the particular grace of God does not prevent him, as it is certain that in many cases it does not. Temptation first finds a man evil, and then makes him worse.

And thus much for the first advantage which a temptation has towards the attainment of its hour; namely, the general corruption of man's nature, suiting it to all the proposals of the tempter, and rendering it always ready both to invite him and to be invited by him.

2. The next advantage is from that particular corruption, or sort of sin, which a man is most peculiarly prone and inclined to.

And this is one step and advance beyond the former. For though every man, as we have shown, has the root and seeds of all sins virtually in him, yet through the good providence of God (setting bounds to the extravagance of nature) no man is equally inclined or carried out to all sorts of sin; for that would quickly throw the whole world into confusion. But there is a particular bent of constitution, which derives and contracts the general stream of natural corruption into a much narrower channel, by that special propensity which every man finds in him-

self to some one kind of vice or sinful passion more than to any other. Such a thing there is certainly in all men, and, being founded in nature, it sticks closely and operates strongly.

And so advantageous a ground does this afford the tempter to plant his batteries upon, when he would assault us, that he never overlooks it, but observes it exactly, and studies it throughly, and will be sure to nick this governing inclination (as I may so express it) with some suitable temptation. So that whereas by virtue of this some men are naturally choleric and impatient, some proud and ambitious, some lustful, some covetous, some intemperate, and some revengeful, and the like; this the devil knows better than any man knows himself. He understands the crasis and temperament of his body, and the peculiar turns and motions of his mind and fancy, better than any physician can judge of one, or any philosopher can give an account of the other; and accordingly a man shall be sure to hear from him, and receive many a terrible blow and buffet on his blind side.

He is not such a bungler at his art, as to use the same nets and baits indifferently for all sorts of game. He will not tempt a shrewd, designing, active, aspiring mind, with the gross and low pleasures of wine or women; nor a sot or an epicure with the more refined allurements of power or high place. But still suiting his proposals to the temper of the person whom he addresses them to, he strikes for the most part home and sure, and it is seldom but he speeds. And therefore let a man look to it, and before he enters the combat with so experienced an enemy, who will assuredly find him out, and fight him (if possible) to his disadvantage, let him view and review himself all over, and consider where he lies most opportune and open to a fatal thrust, and be sure to guard himself there, where he is most liable to be mortally struck.

3. A third advantage towards the prevailing hour of a temptation, is the continual offer of alluring objects and occasions extremely agreeable to a man's particular corruption. Fire cannot burn without fuel; and the strongest inclinations would in a little time faint and languish, if there were not objects to invigorate and draw them forth: nay, and the very faculties of the mind would grate and prey upon themselves, if they found no matter from without to work and whet upon. Something there must be to employ them; and whatsoever employs, will at the same rate also improve them.

And therefore the world is like a great storehouse, full of all sorts of provisions for men's lusts; so that whatsoever course may be taken to mortify or extinguish them, it is certain that, being left to themselves, they will never die of want. For there are riches for the covetous, honours for the ambitious, and pleasures for the voluptuous. And so keen and eager are the appetites of corrupt nature towards these things, that where such

plentifnl, and withal such suitable preparations come before them, they will be sure to fall to. And such moreover is the mutual agreeableness between them, that they never fail to find out one another; either such objects to find out the heart, or the heart them. And if there could chance to be any failure or defect upon this account, there is an old pander (the prince of pimps) always at hand, who makes it his great business and perpetual study to bring them together, and will never suffer a vicious inclination to starve for want of a suitable object to feed it. And this introduces

4. The fourth advantage, or furtherance towards the maturity or prevalent season of a temptation: which is the unspeakable malice and activity, together with the incredible skill and boldness of the tempter. Now malice and envy are of all ill qualities the most fierce, active, and indefatigable; admitting neither peace nor truce with their respective objects. And accordingly, being much higher and more sublimate in the devil's nature than they can be in man's, they carry him roving and ranging about the world like a roaring, insatiable lion, night and day upon the search "whom he may devour;" and the more he has devoured, the greater is his appetite to devour more. His mouth is always open, and his eyes never shut. He is restless and unwearied; and though idleness be a sin which he loves to tempt men to, yet he is never guilty of it himself.

To which we may add his profound skill and cunning in the various arts, wiles, and stratagems which he has to overreach and circumvent even the wisest and most watchful. It is enough to say of his cunning, that it is equal to his diligence, and not inferior to his malice.

And then in the last place, so intolerable is his boldness, or rather impudence, that no repulse shall daunt, no defeat discourage him, nor any degree of holiness deter him from tempting even the best of men to the very worst of sins. For he set upon Adam in his innocence and prevailed; nay, and he ventured upon our Saviour himself, and that again and again: and though as often as he spoke he was baffled, yet still, though baffled, he would not be silenced: he received foil after foil, and was thrice conquered before he would quit the field.

From all which qualifications, united in our mortal enemy, let this be concluded upon: that as certain as it is that there is such an evil spirit in the world, so certain is it that every man living has a restless, implacable, subtle, audacious adversary, who will infallibly engage and fall upon him, and with his utmost skill and force dispute it with him for his salvation. But then,

5. Over and above all this, God sometimes, in his wise providence and just judgment, commissions this implacable spirit to tempt at a rate more than ordinary. And this must needs be a further advantage towards the ripening of a temptation, than

any of the former. I shall not presume to assign all the reasons why God is pleased to do this. But it is enough that sometimes to try and manifest men's graces, as when he commissioned the devil to try and tempt Job in that terrible manner, Job i. 12; and sometimes to reproach them for their weakness, in conjunction with their absurd confidence, as when, at the tempter's own instance, he allowed him to winnow and tempt Peter, Luke xxii. 31; and sometimes to punish them for former great sins, as when he empowered the evil spirit to persuade that monster of wickedness, and first-born of hell, king Ahab, to "go up and perish at Ramoth Gilead," 1 Kings xxii. 22, "Thou shalt persuade him," says God, "and prevail also. Go forth and do so." I say, it is enough, that for these and the like ends (especially in the way of judgment for former guilt) God is sometimes pleased to take this dreadful course with men: nothing being more true, than that as temptation brings a man to sin, so sin also brings him to temptation.

But the thing which I would chiefly observe from hence is, that in all such cases, in which the devil acts by commission from above, he tempts (as we may say) with authority, and consequently, with more than usual vehemence and success; always using the former, and seldom failing of the latter: as indeed it is hard to imagine how he should, when the only thing that can stand between him and success (to wit, the divine grace), in the case here supposed by us, is withdrawn, and the man thereby left wholly to himself. And whosoever has any experience in these matters, will easily acknowledge, that for a man to be left to himself, and to be left to the devil, will be found in the issue but one and the same thing.

6. A sixth advantage, by which a temptation approaches to its crisis or proper hour, is a previous, growing familiarity of the mind with the sin which a man is tempted to; whereby he comes to think of it with still lesser and lesser abhorrences, than formerly he was wont to do. Frequent thoughts of a thing naturally wear off the strangeness of it: for by these the mind converses with its objects; and conversation breeds acquaintance with things as well as persons.

Upon which account, when any ill thing is suggested to the mind, whether from a man's own corruption within, or from the devil, or the examples of wicked men without, if it be not immediately rejected with a present and particular act of abhorrence, it will leave some small impression upon, or disposition in the mind towards that ill thing, which before it had not, and otherwise would not have.

Which impressions or dispositions, though small and inconsiderable at first, yet by the frequent repetition of such like thoughts or suggestions will in the issue amount to something very dangerous, and either produce in the heart a positive inclina-

tion to, or at least extinguish its former aversation from, the sin suggested to it. Either of which will assuredly be made use of by the tempter, and by degrees prepare and smooth him a way, and at length open a door for the temptation in its full force and fury to enter. The serpent has already got in his head, and his whole body will not be long behind.

7. And lastly, there is yet another way by which a temptation arrives to its highest pitch or proper hour; and that is by a long train of gradual, imperceivable encroaches of the flesh upon the spirit. I say, imperceivable for the present, and consider each of them singly and by themselves; but sufficiently perceivable, after that considerable space of time, and a frequent iteration of them, has wrought such a change in the soul, as to a spiritual discernment will quickly show and discover itself.

The meaning of which, I conceive, will be best declared and made intelligible by particular instances, having first premised this great and certain rule, viz. that whatsoever tends to gratify or strengthen the flesh, in the same proportion or degree tends to weaken the spirit; and look in what degree the spirit is weakened, in the same degree it is prepared for and laid open to a temptation.

Now there are several enjoyments in themselves very lawful, and yet such as, upon a free unwary use of them, will by degrees certainly indispose and unspiritualize the mind, dulling its appetite, and taking off its edge and relish to the things of God. A man's food, his sleep, his recreations, nay, and his very business, if not ordered by the arts and conduct of the spirit, may prove a snare to him, and draw off his heart by secret estrangements from those spiritual duties and disciplines, in which the very health and life of his soul consists.

So that after some time so spent, a man shall have lost his heart he knows not how nor which way; and by what dark escapes it has slipped from him he shall hardly be able to learn; only he shall find that when he should make use of it, it is gone. For the reason of which it is enough, that the flesh has got ground of the spirit; the rise of one being still the fall of the other. And when after such a course, either of extreme solicitude or intentness upon business on the one hand, or of gaiety and freedom of conversation on the other, the frame of a man's spirit comes to be loose and unfixed, and taken off from its usual guard; then let him know that the evil hour is preparing for him, and he for that. His enemy is not far off, and it will not be long before he hears from him in some fierce temptation or other.

And thus I have done with the second particular proposed, and shown the several helps and advantages by which a temptation ripens and arrives to its proper hour and full maturity.

But now, to determine how many of these must concur to the bringing of a temptation to such a pass, is a thing not to be done

by any one standing, universal rule. For sometimes two or three, sometimes more, sometimes all of them join and fall in, to the working it up to this critical pitch. Nevertheless, when we have said all that we can upon this subject, that which Agur says, Prov. xxx. 9, of "the way and motion of a serpent upon a rock," may be much more appositely said of the intriguing ways and windings of this old serpent, the tempter, with the heart of man, viz. that they are in the number of those mysterious things which it surpasses the reason of man to give an account of. That he is often at work is too manifest, though the way of his working be undiscernible. Pass we now therefore to

III. The third particular, which is to show *some signs, marks, and diagnostics, whereby we may discern when a temptation has attained its proper season or hour.* I shall instance only in three. As,

1. When there is a strange, peculiar, and more than usual juncture and concurrence of all circumstances and opportunities for the commission of any sin, that especially which a man is most inclined to; then, no doubt, is the hour of temptation. When a man is to take physic, if both the humours within are prepared, and the weather without proves suitable, and the potion itself be strong, the operation and force of it must needs be more than ordinary. And as it is with the physic of the body, so no question it is also with the poison of the soul; the same advantages will give the same force of operation to both.

Sometimes a man shall see the scene of things round about him so fitly laid, and prepared to serve him in the gratification of his corrupt desires, that he cannot but conclude that there was something more than blind chance which brought him into that condition. For when we see a net or snare curiously and artificially placed, we may be sure that there is something intended to be caught, and that the fowler is not far off, whether we see him or no.

Judas, no doubt, had a temptation to gratify his covetous humour before he betrayed his master. For St. John has given us his character, John xii. 6, that "he was a thief, and carried the bag," and that more to serve himself than any one else. But the great hour was not come, that he should show himself so, till he had that opportunity of trucking with the priests; and then he quickly swallowed up the sop and the treason together, sold his conscience, and put his master's blood in his pocket.

A corrupt principle may be strong, though it be still; and as strong at one time as at another, though it does not always break out into the same exorbitance of sin. But when occasion improves and quickens it, circumstances help and encourage it, and opportunities further and push it on: then you shall see not only what a day, but even what an hour of temptation can bring

forth. Fire has always the same consuming quality, though it does not always make work for a brief. Sometimes it is quenched as soon as kindled; but when the wind strikes in with it, and both strengthens and spreads the flame, and the matter upon which it seizes is more than ordinarily catching and combustible, and all means of extinguishing and stopping the progress of it are out of the way; then, and not till then, it shall reign and rage with a boundless irresistible fury, and show you how much another kind of thing it is, while it is your servant, and when it comes to be your master; while it serves the occasions of the house upon the hearth, and when it comes to lord it upon the roof.

Now the case of a man's corruption, before and under the crisis of a temptation, is much after this manner. When it comes against him with all its recruits, all its auxiliaries, all its peculiar advantages; then let him expect a battle, and know that he is to combat a prepared enemy, who has prevented him, and comes to fight him upon the vantage-ground. And as it was said of "the stars fighting in their courses against Sisera," Judges v. 20, so may it be said of a man brought into such a condition, that all the circumstances of time, place, person, and the like, shall jointly fight against him, inflame his corruption, heighten and give life to the temptation, driving it home like so many mighty strokes upon a wedge, strong and sharp-pointed, and apt enough to enter and make its way of itself.

2. A second sign of a temptation's drawing near its hour, is a strange averseness to duty, and a backwardness to, if not a neglect of, the spiritual exercises of prayer, reading, and meditation. Now as every principle of life has some suitable aliment or provision, by which both its being is continued, and its strength supported: so the forementioned duties are the real proper nutriment, by which the spiritual life is kept up and maintained in the vigorous exercise of its vital powers.

And as in all other things, when the great instrument of life, appetite to food, fails them, it is an undoubted argument of some notable disturbance or decay of nature; so when the soul begins to disrelish its daily nourishment of prayer, watchfulness, and strict communion with God, it is an infallible sign that it is under some present disorder, and possibly not far from some mortal distemper.

A man at first, perhaps, feels a kind of grudging and uneasiness all over his body, a deadness upon his stomach, and a drowsiness upon his senses, and he cannot well tell what he ails; but after a few days these uncertain beginnings come to rage in a burning fever, or to strike him with an apoplexy: and then it appears what those symptoms foreboded and tended to all along; and the great question now is, not when or how soon the man shall recover and be well, but whether or no he shall live.

In like manner, when a man finds it thus with himself, as to the state of his soul, that his former freshness and fervour in the service of God is abated, and that his heart either flies off from the duties of religion, or performs them with a cold, faint, languishing indifference: in the judgment of all those guides of souls, who discourse most experimentally and knowingly of these matters, such a one has all the reason in the world to suspect that there is some notable mischief designed him by his spiritual enemy; and that he is entering upon some dangerous trial, some critical, searching temptation, which will be sure to probe him to the bottom, to shake all the powers of his soul; and from which if the divine mercy does in the issue deliver him, yet it will be "so as by fire," by smart, and difficulty, and great unlikelihoods, and by such near approaches to, and narrow rescues from destruction, that it will be matter of horror to him to reflect upon his very deliverance, and the danger will be terrible even after it is escaped.

3. The third and last sign that I shall mention, of a temptation's attaining its full hour or maturity, is a more than usual restlessness and importunity in its enticings or instigations. For it is the tempter's last assault, and therefore will certainly be furious; the last pass which he makes at the soul, and therefore will be sure to be driven home. For he knows that if he succeeds now, he is absolutely victorious; and that if he miscarries in this his last action, all his former arts and attempts vanish and fall to nothing.

So that upon such a promising concurrence of all those mighty advantages which we have mentioned, nothing can remain further to speed his design, but that he presses on to victory, by charging forcibly and frequently: and this he will sometimes do with such fury, pouring in arguments upon the mind so thick and fast, that all contrary considerations and arguings, by which it would fence against the power of his proposals, shall be either stifled with the multitude, or overborne with the urgency and impudence of his solicitations.

There have been strange examples of men brought into such a condition. It is reported of Luther, that being tempted to make away with himself, the temptation grew so fierce and pressing upon him, that falling into an agony, and, as it were, struggling for life, he had no other way to defend himself, but, during the conflict, by frequently urging and repeating over and over to himself the sixth commandment: "Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt do no murder." That so, by encountering this fiery dart, with the continually renewed evidence of the sin offered full and fresh to his faith, in the peremptory, express words of the precept, he might relieve his labouring mind against the present violence of that impious suggestion.

The tempter in this action behaves himself just as you shall see

some eager, ill-bred petitioners, who do not so properly supplicate, as hunt the person whom they address to, dogging him from place to place, till they even extort an answer to their rude requests. So in this case a man shall find himself not only importuned, but even invaded; the temptation shall in a manner break in upon him, and follow him without pause or intermission; so that he shall not be able to discharge his mind of the irksome, incessant representations of the sin which it solicits him to, but his imagination shall be possessed, and his thoughts so far entangled with it, that they shall have no power to divert or pass off to any other thing. And now when a temptation has arrived to this pitch, the tempted person may assure himself that it is at its high crisis, its hour is come, and he is actually engaged in a dispute for his soul, and nothing less than the keeping or losing it for ever is the thing which is contended for.

And thus I have also done with the third particular at first proposed, and given you three several signs or marks, by which the spiritually wise and watchful may observe the motions of their grand enemy, and discern the approach of the fatal season. Of all which we may say, as Christ did of those signs that were to portend his own coming, Mark xiii. 29, "When you shall see these things come to pass, then know that it is nigh, even at the doors." So when a man shall find these things come upon him he must know, that though he is not actually conquered and trodden down, yet the enemy is in his quarters, and the sword at his breast; and if these dangers alarm him not, he is beside the remedies of mercy and the admonitions of grace; he is passing into a state of hardiness and insensibility, and (for ought appears) under all the sad likelihoods of a perishing condition. And thus at length we come to

IV. Our fourth and last particular, which was, *to draw some useful inferences from the whole discourse.* And many such might be drawn from thence. But I shall insist only upon three, and that very briefly. As,

1. That every time in which a man is tempted, is not properly the hour of temptation. A man in his Christian course may meet with several assaults and spiritual rencounters, which he easily masters and breaks through; but if from these slight efforts or velitations (as we may call them) he shall conclude that the tempter can do no more, and from former success in smaller combats shall promise himself certain and final victory in all future conflicts, he will find himself deceived and imposed upon by false measures, taken from insufficient experience. For probably the temptation at those times might not have got all those helps and advantages about it, which were necessary to give it its full strength.

Temptation has its daily risings and fallings, ebbings and

flowings, and a man must daily and of course expect them. But the great danger is not from hence; but when, by a kind of periodical revolution or return, it comes, as I may so speak, to its springtide, then let a man look to his spiritual banks and mounds, that the flood break not in upon him, and the killing waters (as the psalmist expresses it) "come not in even to his soul."

The life and business of a Christian is but too truly a warfare, and a sharp one too; and no warrior must think himself sufficiently informed by a few antecedent skirmishes, what the whole body and united force of his enemy can do in the main heat of the battle. For after a man has been victorious in the former, he may be and very often is, shamefully worsted and overthrown in the latter.

2. The second thing which we shall infer from the foregoing particulars is, that every man living, some time or other, sooner or later, shall assuredly meet with an hour of temptation; a certain critical hour, which shall more especially try what mettle his heart is made of, and in which the eternal concerns of his soul shall more particularly lie at stake. So that if he does not quit himself like a man, and make good his station against this principal assault of his spiritual adversary, a failure or miscarriage then will prove like an oversight in the day of battle, hardly to be recovered by any after reparation.

It is indeed called an hour, but it is such an hour as has an eternity depending on it, and consequently makes a whole life little enough to prepare for it. The advice of the son of Sirach is excellent, and home to the case, Ecclus. ii. 1, "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation." And great reason doubtless has a man to prepare for that which will assuredly be prepared for him, and from which no privilege of Christianity does or can exempt the very holiest and perfectest of men. For gold itself must be tried, and must pass the furnace for that purpose.

Now the two great ways of trial, by which men are generally brought to a dividing point, are by their hopes and their fears. And for the most part the tempter uses to accost men first by their hopes, and to bid fair and high, to see what they will take for their souls; and if he finds that they will come to no bargain with him, but that his offers are rejected, and so this course succeeds not, then he will see what he can do upon their fears, and try whether he can fright or disgrace, beggar or kill men out of their consciences. These I say are the two old stated methods by which his temptations are usually wrought up to a pitch? and if the tempter cannot prevail one way, let no man flatter himself, but rest assured that he will take the other; if he cannot speed as a merchant, he will try what he can do as a warrior.

What our Saviour says of offences, Matt. xviii. 7, holds

equally true of temptation, that "it must needs be that they will come." And accordingly that declaration of his runs absolute and positive, Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." This is the terrible decree and sentence of Christianity. And that critical searching hour (which we have been hitherto discoursing of) is the great instrument of Providence to draw forth and place those two commanding motives of men's actions, and rivals for their choice, duty and interest, one against the other, and to set the offers of this world and the promises of the next, the enjoyments of one and the hopes of the other, in their full competition. And when, after a thorough debate on both sides, the deciding cast and issue of the whole matter comes to this: "Either part with your conscience or your pleasures; your conscience or your interest; your conscience or your estate; nay, your conscience or your very life;" then let a man know that the hour of temptation has overtaken him; and God and his holy angels sit as spectators in heaven, looking down and observing how he will behave and govern himself in this great crisis; in the whole carriage of which, as he is most particularly and directly under God's eye, so it will be a vast help and advantage to him to place God immoveably before his.

In the mean time let it be fixed and concluded upon, that such a season, such an hour will come: and that when it is come, every man must expect to fare in it according as he has prepared himself for it. And this directly brings us to the

3. Third and last inference which I shall make from the words; namely, that the surest way to carry us safe and successful through this great and searching hour of probation, is a strict, steady, conscientious living up to the rules of our religion, which the text here calls a "keeping the word of Christ's patience;" a denomination given to the gospel, from that peculiar distinguishing grace which the great author of the gospel was pleased to signalize it for, above all other religions and institutions in the world, and that both by his precept and example. And therefore we must not take patience here in the new and lately current sense of the word, for patience perforce (though a most useful quality I confess in the case of madness); nor, which is much the same, for a willingness of disposition to suffer, only where a man has no power to resist; according to the republican divinity of some scandalous exploders of the doctrine of passive obedience: a doctrine which shines with as high and flaming an evidence throughout the whole New Testament, as the very history of our Saviour's life does, which was a kind of comment upon it. For the Christian religion, both in itself and in its author, is a suffering religion; a religion teaching suffering, enjoining suffering, and rewarding suffering; and, to express all in a word, it

was Christ's passive obedience, which redeemed the world; and for any one who wears the name of a Christian to scoff at or write against it, and at the same time to look to be saved by it, is certainly very strange and preposterous, and too much in all conscience for any, but such professors of Christianity as live and practise in a direct defiance of their profession.

But to pass to that which I principally intend; I say it is a steady, uniform practice of the common, constant duties of Christianity, which is the Christian's surest preservative against this great and critical day of trial. It is not any one or more strange, superlative act or acts of mortification, nor any high strain of discipline or severity upon ourselves (though of excellent use doubtless in their proper place), but it is the constant, even tenor of a good life, which will be found the best security against the tempter; as no one blow, how great soever, discharged upon an enemy, is so certain a protection against him as a continual posture of defence. And such a thing is a good life, against all the arts and assaults of our subtle, watchful aggressor.

Great disputes there are about religion, and great reason there is that men should be zealous for the truth; nevertheless, be a man's belief never so true, and his religion never so good, an ill life will certainly send him to the devil. And it is really a very senseless and ridiculous thing for an ill liver to be zealous about any religion; it being much the same case, as if one who had a rotten pocky carcass should be extremely solicitous about the colour of his clothes. For suppose a man a murderer, an adulterer, or a perjured, false person, can any religion in the world do such a one any good? No, it is impossible; for if his religion be false, it will further his damnation; and if true, it will aggravate it.

Nothing but "the word of Christ's patience," derived into practice, and digested into a good life, can keep a man firm and tight in the terrible day of temptation; a day which every one who knows the true value of a soul will be always providing against. And that he may do it effectually, let him follow the course which I shall here briefly mention and mark out to him, and so conclude.

As first, let him be frequent and fervent in prayer, and in his devotions to God, both public and private, assuring himself that God values not one without the other. In the next place, let him be exact and impartial in the great work of self-examination, looking often and narrowly into the state of his soul, and clearing all accounts and old scores between God and his conscience. Moreover, let him be much and serious in considering the extreme vanity, emptiness, and shortness of all those worldly enjoyments, which the generality of men do so much dote upon. And lastly, above all, let him daily and hourly, and with the

closest intention of mind, meditate of death and judgment, of the certainty and horror of them, and the intolerable misery of such as shall be overtaken by them in their sins.

And when a man shall have inured and beaten himself to such thoughts of these for some considerable time, the allurements of the flesh and the world will be but dry, tasteless, insipid things to him; and if the tempter comes, all the avenues and passages to such a soul will be found shut and bolted against his temptations, so that he must withdraw and be gone; for where he finds a man so doing, he will find nothing to do himself.

In a word, such a course of living will make that which is generally one of the greatest hours of temptation, even the hour of death itself, neither terrible nor strange; so that although it should be sudden, yet it shall not be surprising, as having nothing more to do with such a one, but only to take him out of this world, which in mind and desire he has left already, and to carry him to heaven, where his conversation was before.

To which God of his mercy vouchsafe to bring us all; to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON VI.

PART V.

HOW AND BY WHAT WAYS GOD DELIVERS US FROM TEMPTATION.

1 CORINTHIANS X. 13.

God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

THERE is nothing in itself more irrational, nor yet (as the state of nature now is) more natural, than for men to govern their hopes and their fears wholly by their present apprehensions; so that where they see a danger manifestly threatening them, there they will fear; and where, on the other hand, the means of their deliverance are obvious to the view of sense, there they will hope; that is, in other words, they will hope and fear just as far as they can see, and trust God so far as they can trust their eyes, and no further. A temper of mind utterly contrary to that heroic nature of faith; the noblest property of which is to give light and evidence to things not seen, and being and subsistence to things before they are; and by so doing, to render its object then more credible, when most invisible; and this (if thoroughly considered) with the highest reason imaginable: for as such a short and limited faith, as ties itself wholly to the measures of sense, can proceed from nothing else but a man's not considering how many ways he may be attacked and ruined, even in his highest security; and how many ways again he may be delivered, even in his deepest distress, which he cannot possibly comprehend nor pierce into; and upon that account presumes in one case, and despairs in another; and this only from a peremptory persuasion founded upon a gross ignorance of both; so on the contrary, that generous confidence of faith, which carries it above all these low phenomena of sense and matter, is bottomed upon the truest and strictest philosophy discoursing about God's wisdom and power; which being confessedly infinite, must needs upon that score, even in the very judgment of bare reason, have unconceivably more ways to deliver from temptation, than there can be temptations for any one to be delivered from. And, therefore, where the utmost

reach of created wit and power ends, then and there these two mighty attributes begin; this being the proper, eminent, and peculiar season for their working wonders; that so by this means a man may see his pitiful, narrow reason nonplussed and outdone, before he sees his wants answered; and the proud nothing own himself baffled, while, in spite of his despair, he finds himself delivered.

Now of all the evils incident to man, there is none from which an escape is both so difficult and so desirable as from temptations. For as all escape, in the very notion and nature of it, imports it in these three things; 1. Some precedent danger threatening; and 2. The difficulty of getting through it; and yet, 3. A final deliverance from it: so in this business of temptation, the danger threatening is no less than damnation; the difficulty of escaping it is founded partly upon the importunity, vigilance, and power of a spirit inexpressibly strong, subtle, and malicious, and partly upon a furious, inbred inclination to sin in the tempted person himself; and this both heightened by inveterate custom, and inflamed by circumstances continually pushing it on to action. All which represents to us such a scene of opposition, such a combination of craft and force together, as must needs overmatch all the strength of nature, all the poor auxiliaries which flesh and blood can bring into the field against so mighty an enemy.

And therefore nothing less than a being infinitely wise, and thereby able to sound all the depths, and to outreach and defeat all the finesses and intrigues of this tempting spirit; and withal, of an infinite, irresistible power, to support the weaknesses and supply the defects of a poor sorry mortal, engaged against him and ready to fall under him: nothing, I say, but that almighty Being which can do all this, can break the bonds and loose the cords which the tempter holds the tempted person by, and so give him a full and absolute deliverance.

Now how, and by what ways, God does this, shall be our present business to inquire. In which, though (as I showed before) it would be a great vanity, and as great an absurdity, to offer to reduce omniscience to our methods, or to confine omnipotence to our measures, and consequently to give a full and distinct account of those innumerable ways by which the great Ruler of the world brings about his designs, especially in his dealing with the souls of men (which ever was and will be strange, secret, and unaccountable), yet I shall venture to assign four several ways, and those very intelligible to any considering mind, by which God is pleased, in the course of his providence, to deliver men out of temptation. As,

1st. If the force of the temptation be chiefly from the vehement, restless, and incessant importunities of the evil spirit, God often puts an issue to the temptation, *by rebuking and commanding*

down the tempter himself. For we must know, that although the devil, in his dealings with men, acts the part of an enemy; yet still, in respect of God, he does the work of a servant, even in his greatest fury, and operates but as an instrument; that is, both with dependence and limitation. He is in a chain, and that chain is in God's hand; and consequently, notwithstanding his utmost spite, he cannot be more malicious than he is obnoxious. And therefore, being under such an absolute control, all that he does must be by address and art, he must persuade us to be damned, cajole and court us to destruction. He must use tricks and stratagems, urge us with importunity, surprise us with subtlety, till at length we enter upon death by choice, and by our own act put ourselves into the fatal noose.

For certain it is, that God has not put it into the power of any created being to make a man do an ill thing against his will, but has committed the great portal and passage into his soul, to wit, the freedom of his will, to his own keeping; and it is not all that the devil can do, that can force the key of it out of his hands. But he must first be a tempter, before he can be a destroyer.

Nevertheless, though he cannot compel to sin, yet he can urge, and press, and follow a man with vehement and continual solicitations to it. And though his malice can go no further, yet certainly it is a real torture and a great misery to a well-disposed mind, that he should go so far, and to find itself incessantly importuned to any vile thing or action; indeed as great and vexatious as blows or bastinadoes can be to the body: for during the solicitation, the spiritual part is all the time struggling and fencing, and consequently in the same degree suffering and oppressed; and for any one to be always in a laborious, hazardous posture of defence without intermission or relief, must needs be intolerable.

For admitting that none of the fiery darts of the devil should actually kill and destroy, yet certainly it is next to death to be always warding off deadly blows, and to be held upon the rack of a constant, anxious, unintermitted fear about the dreadful issues of a man's eternal condition. And that man who is not pierced with a mortal wound, yet if he is continually pulling arrows out of his flesh, and hearing bullets hissing about his ears, and death passing by him but at the distance of a hair's breadth, has surely all that fear, and danger, and destruction, in the nearest approach of it, can contribute to make him miserable.

It is hard indeed, if not impossible, to assign exactly how one spirit may operate upon and afflict another. But thus much it is very agreeable to reason to suppose, to wit, that a stronger spirit may proportionably make the afflictive impression upon a weaker, which a stronger body is able to make upon a body of less strength than itself. And two ways we have ground to conclude that the evil spirit does this by; one by raising strange and unaccountable horrors in the mind; and the other by rude and

boisterous impulses to something contrary to the judgment of conscience. The former of which might easily be made out both from reason and experience; and the latter is, what we are now discoursing of. And a very wretched, dangerous, and dubious condition is the soul very often cast into by this means; and being brought thereby to the very brink of destruction, God is then pleased to step in to his assistance; and when the tempter grows restless and next to violent, and instead of persuading, attempts even to ravish the consent, God stops his foul mouth, and commands him to hold his peace, as formerly in Job's case he commanded him to hold his hand.

For his devilish method in tempting is commonly this. First to begin the temptation with a still voice and a gentle breath, and all the sly and fawning applications that can be; but when that will not do, then he raises his voice, and the temptation blows rough and high like a tempest, and would shake down where it cannot insinuate. It raises a storm amongst all the powers and faculties of the soul, and like the rolling billows of a troubled sea, dashes them one against another, judgment against appetite, and appetite against judgment, till the poor man, as it were, broken between both, is ready to sink and perish, and make shipwreck of his faith, did not a merciful and powerful voice from above rebuke the winds, and compose the waves, and chide down the rage and blusterings of so impetuous an adversary.

And this God often does out of mere compassion to a soul labouring and languishing, and even wearied out with the frequent and foul instigations of a tempting spirit: for all importunity is a kind of violence to the mind. This was the course which our Saviour himself took with him in the like case. The devil seemed to pour in his temptations upon him without any pause or intermission; and accordingly our Saviour answers his first and second temptations with fit scriptures, calmly and rationally applied to both; but when he grew impudent and audacious in his third temptation, our Saviour not only confounds him with scripture, but also cuts him short with a word of authority, and bids him give over, and be gone. And as afterwards he once took up Peter speaking like Satan, so at this time he turns off Satan speaking like himself, with a Ὕπαγε Σατανᾶ, "Get thee behind me." And a most proper and efficacious way it is certainly to repel the encroachment of a bold and troublesome proposal, to be rough and peremptory with it, to strike it down, and to answer it with scorn and indignation; and so to silence the pressing insolence of a saucy sophister, not so much by confuting the argument, as by countermanding the opponent. And this is one way by which God gives deliverance and escape out of temptation; he controls and reprimands the tempter, and takes off the evil spirit before he can be able to fasten.

2dly. If the force of a temptation be from the weakness of a

man's mind, rendering it unable of itself to withstand and bear up against the assaults of the tempter; God oftentimes delivers from it *by mighty, inward, unaccountable supplies of strength,* conveyed to the soul immediately from himself. The former way God delivers a man by removing his enemy, but this latter by giving him wherewithal to conquer him. And this is as certain a way of deliverance as the other can be. For surely a man is equally safe, whether his enemy flies from him or falls before him. It seems to be with the soul, with reference to some temptations, as with one of a weak and a tender sight, with reference to the sunbeams beating upon it: if you divert or keep off the beam, you relieve the man; but if you give him an eagle's eye, he will look the sun in the face, endure the light, and defy the impression. So if God, instead of silencing and commanding off the tempter, suffers him to proceed and press home the temptation, yet if at the same time also he gives in a proportion of strength superior to the assault, and an assistance greater than the opposition, the man is as much delivered as if he had no enemy at all; the manner indeed of his deliverance is infinitely more noble, and as much preferable to the other, as the trophies of a conqueror surpass the poor inglorious safeties of an escape.

Thus it was with that holy and great man St. Paul. He was not only accosted, but even worried with a messenger from Satan; a messenger sent not only to challenge, but actually to duel him: and so sharp was the encounter, that it passed from solicitations to downright blows; for in 2 Cor. xii. 7, he tells us he was "buffeted." And so near was he to an utter despair of the main issue of the conflict, that he cries out like a man vanquished, and with the sword of a prevailing enemy at his throat, "O wretched man, who shall deliver me!" Delivered (we all know) he was at length, and that it was God who delivered him. But how? Why, not by taking off the tempter, not by stopping his mouth, that he should not solicit, nor lastly, by tying up his hands, that he should not buffet (which yet was the thing which Paul so much desired, and accordingly so earnestly prayed for). "Thrice," says he, "I besought the Lord that it might depart from me," ver. 8. But God designed him another and a nobler kind of deliverance, even by a sufficiency of his grace, ver. 9. "My grace," says he, "is sufficient for thee." God himself, as I may so speak, undertook the quarrel, and fought his battles, and that brought him off, not only safe, but triumphant; which surely was as much more honourable than to have the combat ended by parting the combatants, as it is for a generous and brave enemy to have his quarrel decided by the verdict of a victorious sword, than taken up and compromised by the mean expedients of reference and arbitration.

But this kind of deliverance by such mighty inward conveyances of strength was never so signal and illustrious, as in

that noble army of martyrs, which fought Christ's battles in the primitive ages of the church. For what could make men go laughing to the stake, singing to the rack, to the saw, and the gridiron, to the wild beasts and the lions, with a courage vastly greater than theirs, but an invincible principle, of which the world saw the manifest effects indeed, but could not see the cause? What, I say, could make nature thus triumph over nature in the cause of religion? Some heathen philosophers, I confess, did, and some heathenish Christians (who have neither religion nor philosophy) still do ascribe all this to the peculiar strength and sturdiness of some tempers.

But in answer to these; in the first place I ask, where such a strength and sturdiness of temper ever yet was, or elsewhere to be found in any great and considerable multitude of men? Flesh and blood was and will be the same in all places and ages. But is flesh and blood left to itself an equal match to all the arts and inventions, all the tortures and tyrannies, which the will, power, and malice of persecution could or can encounter it with? No, assuredly the courage, which rises and reaches up to martyrdom, is infinitely another thing from that which exerts itself in all other cases whatsoever. Nor can every bold man, who in hot blood can meet his enemy in the field, upon the stock of the same courage fry at the stake, or with a fixed deliberate firmness of mind endure to have his flesh torn off with burning pincers piece by piece before his eyes. No, there are few hearts so strongly and stoutly hard, but are quickly melted down before such fires.

All this is most undeniably true. But then, by way of further answer to the forementioned allegation, that the natural sturdiness of some tempers might be sufficient to enable some persons to endure such exquisite torments as we have been speaking of, I add moreover, that the endurance of them has been in none more eminent and glorious than in persons of a quite contrary temper, of a weak and tender constitution, and of a nice and delicate education. Nay (and which is yet more) in such as have been extremely diffident and suspicious of themselves, lest upon the terrible approach of the fiery trial they should fly off, and apostatize, and deny the truth. And yet when God has brought these poor diffident, self-distrusting souls to grapple, as it were, hand to hand with the enemy whom they so much dreaded, they have found something within them greater and mightier than any thing which they feared without them; something which equally triumphed over the torment itself, and their own more tormenting fears of it. All which could spring from nothing else but those secret inward supplies and assistances of the divine Spirit, which raised and inspired their blessed souls to such an ecstasy of fortitude, as not only exceeded the very powers, but almost overflowed the very capacities of nature.

For the truth is, nature at best is but a poor and a feeble thing, "the flesh is weak," and the heart fallacious; purposes are frail, and resolutions changeable, and grace itself in this life is yet but begun. But, thanks be to God, our principal strength lies in none of all those, but in those auxiliaries which shall flow in upon us from the almighty God, while we are actually engaged for God, in those hidden ineffable satisfactions, which are able to work a man up to a pitch of doing and suffering incredibly above and beyond himself.

For still as God brings his servants into different states and conditions, he fails not to measure out to them a different spirit, suited and proportioned to their respective exigences of each condition. For this is a most certain truth, and worthy of our best observation, that the same almighty and creative power, which has given to one man greater strength of mind than to another, can, and undoubtedly very often does, vouchsafe to the same man greater strength of mind at some times, than he does at others. Without which consideration it is impossible to give any satisfactory account of the cause and reason of that miraculous passive fortitude (may our triumphant Whigs pardon the word) which shined forth in the primitive Christians: which yet all the records of antiquity, and historians of the church, are unanimously witnesses and equally admirers of. From all which it follows, that no man living, though never so humble, so distrustful and suspicious of himself, can, from any thing which he finds or feels in his heart in the time of his prosperity, certainly know, what a daring, invincible spirit may enter into him, when God shall call him forth as his champion to own and assert an oppressed truth, to act and to suffer, to fight and perhaps die, in his despised cause.

And therefore, if a day of trial should come upon us (as God knows how near it may be, and how terrible it may prove), let us so prepare before it comes, as not to despond under it when it does come. For when I consider that vast load of national guilt, which has been growing upon us ever since the year forty-one; and never yet to any considerable degree accounted for to public justice; I cannot persuade myself, that either the judgments of God or the malice of man have done with us yet: especially since the same faction, which overturned the church and monarchy then, is, with all its republican guilt, strong and in heart now; and gnashing its teeth at the monarchy, and at the church of England for the sake of the monarchy, every day. And it is but a melancholy reflection, I confess, to all honest minds, to consider what so daring a combination may in a short time arrive to.

Nevertheless, as I said before, let us not despond, but only make this our care, that though we suffer by their spite, we may not share in their guilt. And then we may be confident, that our

main strengths will be found in better keeping than our own; as being neither deposited in our own hands, nor to be measured by our own knowledge. We shall find those inward comforts and supports of mind, which all the malice of men and devils shall never be able to suspend us from, or deprive us of. "All my fresh springs are in thee," says David, Ps. lxxxvii. 7. We shall find a fulness in the stream to answer all our needs, though the spring perhaps, which feeds it, may escape our eye.

When our Saviour Christ had set before his disciples a full and lively draught of all those barbarous and cruel usages which they should meet with after his death, from synagogues and councils, from kings and potentates, before whom they should be arraigned, and brought to plead their cause against all the disadvantages which the wit and eloquence, the power and malice of their persecutors could put them to; he well knew that this would create in them great anxiety of thoughts and solicitous forecast, how they, who were men of an unskilled, unlearned simplicity, and withal none of the greatest courage, should be able to manage their own defence so as to acquit themselves at the bar of the learned, and in the face of princes. All this, I say, he foresaw and knew; and therefore, Luke xxi. 14, 15, he lays in this sovereign and peculiar antidote against all such disheartening apprehensions: "Settle it," says he, "in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." And in Matt. x. 19, it is emphatically remarked, that it should be "given them in that same hour what they should speak." Which undeniably proves, that they should receive that ability by immediate and divine infusion; as coming in upon them just in the season, in the very hour and critical instant of their necessity.

This example, I confess, is particular, personal, and miraculous; but the reason of it is universal and perpetual, as being founded in this: that as nature in things natural, so grace in things supernatural, is never deficient or wanting to men in necessities. And as necessary as it was for the first founding of a church, that Christ should vouchsafe his disciples those miraculous assistances in point of ratiocination and elocution, so necessary it is at this very day, and will be so long as the world lasts, for God to vouchsafe men, under some temptations, such extraordinary supplies of supporting grace, as otherwise are not commonly dealt forth to them. For still (as we observed before in St. Paul's case) God intends us a sufficiency of grace. But where the trial is extraordinary, unless the grace afforded be so too, it neither is nor can be accounted sufficient. Let this therefore be the second way by which God delivers out of temptation.

3dly. If the force of a temptation springs chiefly from the unhappy circumstances of a man's life continually exposing him

to tempting objects and occasions of sin, God frequently delivers such a one *by a providential change of the whole course of his life*, and the circumstances of his condition. And this he may do either by a general public change and revolution of affairs, which always carries with it the rise and fall of a vast number of particular interests, whereby some perhaps whose greatness had been a snare to themselves, as well as a burden to others, are happily thrown down into such a condition, as may serve to mortify and fit them for another world, from such a one as had before made them intolerable in this.

And sometimes God does this by a personal change, affecting a man only in his own person, and his private concerns. So that, whereas his former conversations, interests, and acquaintance might enslave him to some sort of objects and occasions, which have such a strange and powerful ascendant over his temper and affections, that he is never assaulted by them, but he is still foiled in the encounter, and always comes off from them a worse man than they found him: in this case, God by a sovereign turn of his providence alters and new-models the whole state and course of such a one's affairs; and thereby breaks the snare, and unties the several bonds and ligaments of the fatal knot, and so unravels the whole temptation.

And this is as much God's prerogative, and the act of a divine power, as that to which a man owes his very being and creation. For as no man can "add one cubit to his stature;" neither can he add one span, one hand's breadth to his fortune. For that a man should be either high or low, rich or poor, strong or weak, healthful or sickly, or the like, is wholly from the disposal of a superior power; and yet upon these very things depends the result and issue of all temptations.

Accordingly, if God shall think fit to strip a voluptuous person of his riches and interest; and thereby transplant him from an idle and delicate way of living into a life of hardship, service, and severe action; from the softness of a court to the disciplines of a camp, to long marches, short sleeps, and shorter meals; there is no question but those temptations which drew their main force and prevalence from the plenties of his former condition, will attack him but very faintly under the penuries of the quite contrary; and the combustible matter being thus removed, the flame must quickly abate and languish, expire, and at length go out of itself.

Nevertheless there is, I confess, such an impregnable strength, such an exuberant fulness of corruption in some natures, as to baffle and disappoint all these methods and applications of providence; and even where objects and occasions of sin are wanting, to supply the want of them by an inexhaustible overflowing pravity and concupiscence from within. So that such a one can be proud and insolent, though Providence clothes him with rags,

and seats him upon a dunghill; he can be an epicure even with the bread and water of affliction; nor can hardship and hunger itself cure him of his sensuality, the fury of his appetites remaining still fierce and unmortified, in spite of the failure of his stores and the scantiness of his condition; in a word, the man is his own tempter, and so is always sure of a temptation.

All this we must own to be very true; but then this is also as true, that these and the like hard and severe passages of providence have in them a natural fitness to work upon the heart of man, though some hearts are never actually wrought upon by them. For no doubt there are monsters and anomalies not only in the course of nature, but also in that of grace and morality; and some sort of tempers are not to be altered, and much less bettered by any or all of those disciplines, by which yet God reclaims and effectually reduces millions of souls to himself. God strikes many in their temporal concerns to promote and further them in their spiritual; and if this way fails of its designed effect, it is not from the unfitness of the remedy, but the invincible indisposition of the patient. God knows how to reach the soul through the body, and commonly does so; and so do the laws of all the wise nations in the world: though our new-fashioned politics, I confess, contrary to them all, have cried down the fitness of all temporal inflictions, to reduce men to a sober sense and judgment in matters of religion.

Nevertheless the sacred story assures us, that this was still the course which God took with his own people. They were the sins and apostasies of their souls, for the reformation of which he plagued them in their bodies and estates; and when profaneness or idolatry was the malady, captivity and the sword were generally the cure. This was God's method, and by this he put a stop to the sin, and an end to the temptation. Nor do we find, that the Jews ever threw it in the prophets' teeth, when they denounced God's judgments against them, that sword and famine, and such like temporal miseries and calamities, were things wholly improper, and unable to work upon the conscience: for their conscience knew and told them quite the contrary. And much less do we find, that God ever thought it suitable to his wisdom to secure the authority of those laws by which he meant to govern the world, by proclaiming impunity and indulgence to the bold violators of them.

And thus much for the third way by which God delivers out of temptation; namely, by altering the circumstances of a man's life, when the temptation is principally founded in them and arises from them. So that if riches debauch a man, poverty shall reform him. If honour and high places turn his head, a lower condition shall settle it. If his table becomes his snare, God will remove it, and diet him into a more temperate and severe course of living. In a word, God will cut him short in his very

conveniences, rather than suffer him in his extravagances; and, to prevent his surfeits, abridge him even in his lawful satisfactions.

4thly and lastly, If the force and strength of a temptation be chiefly from the powerful sway and solicitation of some unruly and corrupt affection, God delivers from it *by the overpowering influence and operation of his Holy Spirit* gradually weakening, and at length totally subduing it. The strength of a temptation lies generally in the strength of a man's corruption. And the tempter for the most part prevails not so much by what he suggests to a man as by what he finds in him; for what hold can he have of that man, in whom he finds nothing to take hold of him by? They are our lusts, our depraved appetites, and corrupt affections, which give the tempter such a mighty power and advantage over us. Otherwise, if these were thoroughly mortified and extinguished, the temptation must of necessity fail, and sink, and vanish into nothing, for want of matter to work upon. It is said of Archimedes, that he would undertake to turn about the whole earth, if he could but have some place beside the earth to fix his feet upon. In the like manner, as skilful an engineer as the devil is, he will never be able to play his engines to any purpose, unless he finds something to fasten them to. If indeed he finds a man naturally choleric and passionate, he has numberless ways and arts to work upon his choler, and transport him to a rage; if he finds him lustful, he will quickly blow up his lewd heats into a flame; and if luxurious and sensual, he can lay a thousand trains to betray him to excess and intemperance. But still in all these cases, and many more, it is the corrupt humour within us wherein his great strength lies. It being with the soul in such instances, as with some impregnable fort or castle, nothing but treachery within itself can deliver it up to the enemy.

"I withheld thee from sinning against me," says God to Abimelech, Gen. xx. 6; and no doubt God has innumerable ways by which he does this: though still, by the way, barely to withhold a man from sin, and to cure him of it, are things extremely different: the proper effect of this latter being to bring a man to heaven, but of the former, without this, only to suffer him to pass on in a cleanlier way to hell. God may withhold a man from sin, by plucking away the baneful object that would have ensnared him; as likewise by diverting the course of his thoughts and the bent of his desires, by sundry cross accidents cast in his way. And lastly, after a full purpose of sin conceived, he may by many intervening impediments disable him from the execution of it: with several other ways of restraint which we are not aware of; and all of them, no question, very great mercies, as giving a man some check at least in his full career to destruction.

But when, over and above all this, God, by the powerful im-

pressions of his almighty Spirit, shall make a man, of angry and passionate, meek and patient; of lustful, chaste; of luxurious, temperate and abstemious; that is, when he shall subdue, break, and mortify the sinful appetite and inclination itself, and plant a mighty contrary bias and propensity of will in the room of it (all which God can do and sometimes has done), this is a greater, a nobler, and a surer deliverance out of temptation, than either the removal of the enticing object, or the cutting off the occasion; nay, than the very prevention of the sinful act itself. It is undoubtedly one of the greatest and the best things which God does for a man in this world; and without which a man lives in continual danger of being ruined by every returning temptation. For certain it is, that he cannot be secure from the returns, nay, the frequent violent returns of it. In a word, as long as the old ferment remains unthrown out, a man cannot be safe; nor can he assure himself, that after a very long cessation it shall not break out and rage afresh, as occasion may give life and motion to his corruption.

But you will say, perhaps, where are there any instances of such a mighty change wrought upon men? I confess there are but very few, and I must confess also, that this, upon supposal of the necessity of such a change, is a very dreadful consideration. Nevertheless, some such instances there are. For both the scripture asserts it, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11; and those known expressions of regeneration and the new creature do evidently import it, John iii. 3—7; and the experience of many good men now in heaven, who were far from having been always such while they lived upon earth, does fully confirm it. Howbeit, we must still acknowledge thus much, that wheresoever such mighty changes are found, they are (as I may so express it) the very trophies and *magnalia* of grace, the peculiar triumphs of the Spirit over the corruption of nature, and the grand instances of its invincible controlling power over the hearts of men. But still, I say, for all the rarity and fewness of such examples, God will have the world know (maugre all our flourishing Socinians and Pelagians) that under the gospel economy there is such a thing, such a *gratia vorticordia*, as we have been speaking of. And I fully believe, from the authority of much learneder men than either Pelagius or Socinus, or any of their preferred disciples, as well as from the authority of holy scripture (paramount to all other authorities whatsoever), that none ever yet did, or ever shall, go to heaven, whom God does not vouchsafe these heart-changing impressions of his Spirit more or less to. And indeed if we do but grant the general corruption of human nature through original sin, it is infinitely sottish, as well as impious, to assert the contrary.

And as to the present subject now before us, I doubt not to affirm, that these extraordinary workings of the Spirit, in the sanctifi-

cation and change of men's hearts, are so much the very masterpiece of God's power, and the greatest (as well as last) efforts of his mercy, in ridding men out of temptation, that all other ways (though confessedly great in themselves) are yet as nothing in comparison of this. For they are all of them but the diverting of a blow, not the conquest of an enemy; but like the dealing with a man under a fever or an ague, in which there may be many ways both to lessen and to put off a fit (and those of singular use too), but nothing but the removal of the feverish and morbific matter within can carry off the distemper.

Let this therefore be the fourth and last way which we shall mention, whereby God gives escape out of temptation; namely, by the inward overpowering influences of his Spirit, working such a mighty change upon the will and the affections, that a man's desires shall become cold and dead to those things, which before were so extremely apt to captivate and command them; than which there cannot be a greater balk to the tempter, nor a more effectual defeat to all his temptations.

But now, besides all these four ways of deliverance, there are no doubt (as I showed at first) innumerable others, which no human understanding is able to comprehend or look into. Nevertheless, so much I shall venture to say, that there is hardly any sort or degree of temptation which man is subject to, but by some one or other of those four mentioned ways God has actually given men a full and a complete deliverance from it.

Now there are several inferences naturally flowing from the foregoing particulars, and those of no small use; but being too many to be fully treated of now, and therefore reserving them to a distinct discourse by themselves; as I have already laid before you some of the principal ways and methods by which God delivers out of temptation, so I shall now mark out to you some of the principal temptations also which do most threaten and endanger the souls of men, and which God principally magnifies his goodness by delivering them from. As,

1. *A public declared impunity to sin* is one of the greatest temptations to it which it is possible for human nature to be brought under. For if laws be intended by God and man for some of the principal preventives of sin, and the sin-preventing strength of the law lies chiefly in the coercive force it has over the transgressors of it; it is manifest, that when these coercions are taken from it, the law is disarmed, feeble, and precarious, and sin, like a mighty torrent, when the banks are cut down, must break in, and pour itself upon the lives and manners of men without resistance or control. And I need say no more than this, that laws without power to affect or reach the transgressors of them, are but *imperii et justitiæ ludibria*, the mockeries of justice, the reproaches of government, and the invincible encouragements of sin; for whatsoever weakens the law, in the same degree also invites the transgression.

Some, I know, talk of politics and reason of state; but there is no such thing as policy against common sense and experience, nor any true reason of state against religion. For since the propensity of man's nature to most things forbidden is so mighty and outrageous, that nothing can check or overawe it, but the dread and terror of the law; it is evident, that when the law is stripped of that, by which alone it can strike terror into the despisers of it, it is in effect to bid vice and profaneness do their worst, and to bid virtue and religion shift for themselves; the grand rule by which some politicians (as they would be thought, forsooth) govern their counsels.

2. *The wicked, vicious, and scandalous examples of persons in place and power,* are strong temptations to sin. For amongst the prime motives of human actions, next to laws, most reckon examples, and some place examples above them. For though indeed there may be a greater authority in laws, yet there is a greater force (because a greater suitableness) in examples; and then experience shows, that it is not so much what commands, as what agrees, which gains upon the affections; and the affections, we all know, are the grand springs and principles of action.

So that if a prince, for instance, gives himself up to lewdness and uncleanness, there is no doubt but whoring will soon come into fashion, and that he will quickly find more by a great many to follow him in his lusts, than to obey him in his laws. If a prince be a breaker of his word, his oath, or his solemn promise, it may prove a shrewd temptation to others to do the like by him. And then he may thank his own example, if he suffers by the imitation. Likewise if a clergyman be noted for sensuality, covetousness, or ambition, he may preach his heart out in behalf of the contrary virtues, and all to no purpose; for still his example will be a stronger temptation to the sin, than his doctrine can be an enforcement of the duty.

The sins of princes and priests are of a spreading and a reigning contagion; and though naturally they are no more than the acts of particular persons, yet virtually and consequently they are often the sins of a whole community. And if so, good God! what huge heaps of foul guilt must lie at such sinners' doors! For every person of note, power, and place, living in an open violation of any one of God's laws, holds up a flag of defiance against heaven, and calls in all about him to fight under his lewd banner against God and his express commands, and so, as it were, by a kind of homage and obedience, to be as vile and wicked as himself. And when it once comes to this, then all the villanies which were committed by others in the strength and encouragement of his devilish example, will be so personally charged upon his account, and as a just debt exacted of him to the utmost farthing.

3. And lastly, *Great, cruel, and vexatious oppressions of men in*

their persons, liberties, and estate, are strong and powerful temptations to sin; and that indeed to some of the worst of sins, such as are murmuring and repining at Providence, and perhaps questioning, nay, and possibly sometimes absolutely denying it; besides those sinister and unlawful courses, which they may tempt and drive men to for their deliverance. For as the great master of wisdom tells us, "oppression will make even a wise man mad," Eccles. vii. 7. And whatsoever robs a man of his reason, must needs also give a terrible shake to his religion. Such impressions has it sometimes made upon some of the wisest and holiest men living; and no wonder, since the wisest of men have their weak side, and the holiest some mixture of corruption. Job, David, Jeremy, and Habakkuk, found it so; the last of which debates the case with God in these remarkable words, Hab. i. 13: "Wherefore," says he, "dost thou hold thy tongue, when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than himself?" From which, and such like staggering passages about God's government of the world, we may safely and certainly conclude thus much at least; that that which has been a temptation to the best of men sometimes to dispute it with Providence, will effectually bring ill men to deny it.

The truth is, one grand oppressor (the more is the pity) is able to make many blasphemers; and one French Nero or Dioclesian, prospering in all his cruelties and barbarities, is like to make many more converts to atheism and scepticism, than ever he did to his own false religion.

Though by the way, one would think that such oppressing Nimrods should have a little wit in their cruelty, and take heed how they bear too hard upon their poor subjects, whom God has placed under their government, not under their feet; and that they should find but little temptation to oppression, when others have found oppression so strong a temptation to rebellion.

And thus I have given you three great and notable instances of temptation, and those indeed so great, that thousands have perished by them; and nothing but an infinite power, under the conduct of an infinite mercy, can carry a man safe through them, or victorious over them. Nevertheless, these two things must still be considered by us:

1st. That the strongest temptations to sin are no warrants to sin.

2dly. That God delivers those only out of them, who do their lawful utmost to deliver themselves.

Accordingly to resume and run over the three forementioned particulars. As if a man, for instance, finds himself tempted to any unlawful course, upon a declared impunity to the thing which he is tempted to, let him soberly and seriously consider with himself, that the obligation of a law is the same, though no punishment ever follows the transgression or breach of it; and

that a liberty of sin (christen it by the name of what liberty you will) is yet one of the greatest and dreadfullest judgments which can befall any person or people, and a certain cause as well as sign of an approaching destruction. Again, if a man be tempted to any wicked or vile act by the example of some great, powerful, or illustrious sinner, let him learn, instead of admiring and following the greatness of the person, to abhor the baseness of the practice, as knowing that the man can never authorize the sin, but the sin will be sure to embase the man.

And lastly, if a man finds himself tempted to murmuring and repining at Providence, by his being oppressed in his just rights and estate, as the greatest part of Europe now is; let him satisfy and compose his mind with this consideration, that no oppression can go a step further or last a minute longer than its commission; and that God, who gave it its commission, never did nor will suffer a good man to be oppressed beyond what he is able to endure.

Which, and the like considerations, pressed home upon the heart, will wonderfully blunt the edge and break the force of any temptation. And when a man shall thus acquit himself, and do his part, by fencing in this manner against the assaults and buffets of the tempter, then, and then only, may he be properly said to depend upon God; and while men do so, be the temptation never so great and pressing, such as faithfully depend upon him shall be certainly delivered by him.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON VII.

PART VI.

GOD'S PROMISE OF ASSISTANCE A SUPPORT IN TIME OF TRIAL.

1 Corinthians x. 13.

But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

I HAVE discoursed several times from several texts of scripture upon this great subject of temptation. And that branch of it which I last treated of from this scripture, was about the several ways whereby God delivers men from it.

Concerning which, we are to observe in general, that the said deliverances are of two sorts.

1st. Those whereby God delivers men out of temptation immediately by himself and his own act, without the concurrence or interposal of any act of the tempted person. And,

2dly. Those wherein God makes use of the endeavours of the tempted person himself, in subordination to the workings of his own grace. And these are two, watchfulness and prayer, which I intend for the subject of my next discourse upon that portion of scripture, Matt. xxvi. 41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

Now for the first of these two sorts, viz. that wherein God acts immediately by himself, I showed the instances thereof were innumerable, and such as it was impossible for any human understanding to have a full and a distinct comprehension of. However in particular I then instanced in four; the heads of which, for the better representing the connexion of what went before with that which is to follow, I shall briefly repeat, and so go on. As,

1st. I showed, that if the force and strength of a temptation be chiefly from the vehement, restless, and incessant importunities of the evil spirit, God often puts an issue to the temptation by rebuking and commanding down the tempter himself.

2dly. If the force of a temptation be from the weakness of a man's mind, rendering it unable of itself to withstand and bear up against the assaults of the tempter, God oftentimes delivers from it by mighty, inward, unaccountable supplies of strength, conveyed to the soul immediately from himself.

3dly. If the force of a temptation springs chiefly from the un-

happy circumstances of a man's life, continually exposing him to tempting objects and occasions of sin, God frequently delivers such a one by a providential change of the whole course of his life, and the circumstances of his condition.

4thly and lastly, If the force and strength of a temptation be chiefly from the powerful sway and solicitation of some unruly and corrupt affection, God delivers from it by the overpowering influence and operation of his Holy Spirit, gradually weakening, and at length totally subduing it.

These four ways in particular I assigned, whereby God was pleased to deliver men out of temptation; and though I showed that he had infinite other ways to effect the same, known only to himself; yet I showed withal, that there was hardly any sort or degree of temptation which man is subject to, but, by some or other of these four forementioned ways, God has actually given men a full and complete deliverance from it.

Upon the whole matter, the design of the apostle in the text seems to be the convincing of the persons he wrote to, of these two things: 1st. That it is not man himself, but God, who does and must deliver him out of temptation. 2dly. That the ways by which God does this are certainly above man's power, and for the most part beyond his knowledge too.

Now these two are very great considerations; great indeed in themselves, but greater in the practical consequences naturally deducible from them. And the business I then proposed to myself was, to draw forth and lay before you some of the usefullest and most important of them. Accordingly I undertook to insist upon these five. As,

1. That the only true estimate of an escape from temptation, is to be taken from the final issue and result of it. From whence these two things naturally follow. First, that an escape from a temptation may consist with a very long continuance under it; indeed so long, that God may put an end to the temptation and a man's life together; so that he shall not have striven his last, till he has breathed his last too. And the other inference is, that a final escape and deliverance from temptation may very well consist with several foils under a temptation. Both which considerations are of vast moment to satisfy and instruct the conscience in so important a case, as affording an equal antidote against presumption on the one hand, and despair on the other.

For neither is a foil given or received a conquest. The tempter may be foiled and worsted in many a conflict, and yet make head again, and come off victorious at last, as we have already shown. It is true the scripture tells us, that "if we resist the tempter, he will fly from us." Nevertheless we are not sure, that after that flight he will not return; but that he who flies at one time, may face about and fight it out sharply,

and carry all before him at another. And therefore let no man flatter himself too much upon some little successes against the tempter and his temptations. For it is not every skirmish which determines the victory. Has a man borne up with courage against the first, second, and third assault, whether of pride, lust, intemperance, or whatsoever other vice it be, which the devil is apt to attack the souls of men by; let such a one be joyful, and bless God for it, but still let him be humble too, and prepare for a fourth and fifth encounter, and God knows how many more after them: for he only conquers, who gives the last stroke. On the contrary, has a man received many a foil and wound in the combats between him and his spiritual enemy, yet let him not despond; for God may deliver him for all this; only let him continue the combat still: for as long as a man dares dispute it with his enemy, though with his blood about his ears, he is not conquered. God can turn the fortune of the day when he will, and where the tempted person is not wanting to himself, he always does. But I do not say that he always does this presently; for God may try a man several years, and not deliver him till the last, as a man may struggle with a distemper the greatest part of his life, and yet recover, and get the full mastery of it in the issue; and not only so, but live many a fair and comfortable year after it.

Nothing should make us give up our hope, till it forces us to give up the ghost too. And it is only men's being slavishly tied to the present, and fixing their thoughts wholly upon what they actually see and converse with, which disables them from doing any thing that is great, or enduring any thing that is difficult. The greatest obstacles to a religious course are men's ungovernable passions and affections; and it is impossible to conquer or overrule these, but by carrying the judgment of reason beyond the apprehension of sense: for the passions are all founded upon the present sight and sense of things. And it is this which so wretchedly abuses and transports men, that they think that all the good and evil which is considerable in the world, lies within that pitiful compass of visible objects which they have before them. This, I say, is that which makes them sell eternity for a song, give away their souls for a trifle, and turn their backs upon glory, and immortality, and God himself under the pinch of any present pain, or the bewitchery of some present pleasure. In a word, the main strength of almost every temptation lies in this, that men ascribe all to the present, which is short and contemptible, and nothing to the future, which is infinite and invaluable.

But as reason is of itself able to look much further than sense, so faith is able to look as much beyond reason: and therefore if my reason tells me that there is something in the nature of things which escapes and transcends my view, faith, I am sure,

will take yet a further flight and a nobler prospect, and assure me, that though I am but an inhabitant of this world, yet I am heir of a better, and consequently ought to be governed by my highest interest, and to proportion my esteem to the measure of my concern, which is incomparably greater in the next life than it can be in this.

A man perhaps is pressed hard and sore by a temptation, and he begs as hard of God to deliver him from it: nevertheless the temptation goes on, and he is not presently delivered. But shall now this pitiful thing called man prescribe to his Maker, and (which is yet worse) to his Deliverer? He, I say, who can dance attendance from day to day, and sometimes from year to year, upon such another pitiful thing as himself, possibly a treasurer, chancellor, or some chief officer of state (who may be, and often is, stripped and kicked out of his precarious greatness the next day); and shall this proud nothing think much to attend the uncontrollable pleasure of the almighty God about the inestimable concerns of his never-dying soul?

But let men satisfy themselves that God will have them wait his leisure, and that there is a ripeness for mercy as well as for judgment, and consequently that there must be a fulness of time for the former as well as for the latter. But it has ever been one of the prime arts of the tempter, to make such an attendance tedious, nauseous, and uneasy to men under any present pressure, and thereby to frustrate the wise and leisurely methods of the divine grace for their deliverance. From all which we may with great reason conclude, that nothing can be so fatal and mischievous to a person under temptation as that weakness and instability of spirit, which so naturally betrays him to two of the worst and meanest affections incident to the mind of man, impatience and despair.

2. No way out of any calamity (whatsoever temptation it may subject the afflicted person to), if brought about by his own sin, is, or ought to be accounted a way made or allowed by God for his escape either out of that calamity, or the temptation springing from it. But on the contrary, so far is it from being so, that it is truly and properly a preventing of one death by another, a temporal by an eternal, a seeking to cure the burnings of a fever by the infections of a plague; and in a word, a flying from the devil as a tempter, and running into his hands as a destroyer. For though, indeed, his power and malice be such, as may and does enable him to trouble and distress us (which is the most that he can do), yet nothing but sin can give him power to destroy us. He may lay the train, but till sin gives fire to it, it can do no execution.

The temptations which men generally attempt to rid themselves of this way, are either temptations from suffering, or from the plausible pretences of compassing some great and public

good by an action in itself indeed evil; but yet such as shall be vastly exceeded and overbalanced (as they imagine) by the good brought to pass thereby. But this is a wretched fallacy; and the procurement of the greatest good in the world cannot warrant a man to commit the least evil, nor the safety of a kingdom commute for the loss of his personal innocence. And therefore let us suppose, that a man sees his country ready to sink under the violence of a brutish tyranny; yet for all that, let him take heed that he does not rebel, and that he does not, to prevent it, baffle and distinguish himself out of his duty: for let his grievances and his fears be what they will, the fifth commandment is still where it was, and binds as fast as it did or can do in times of the greatest justice and prosperity; and it is not in the power of the mightiest sinners and the most successful sins, to dissolve or lessen the obliging force of any of God's laws. Or does a man, in the next place, see religion and the church ready to be overrun with fooleries and superstition, or (which is worse) overturned with sacrilege and separation; this will not authorize him to step beyond the compass of a private man, whose business is to honour and preserve religion only by a sincere practice of the duties of it; and for the rest, let him leave it to that God who governs the world to protect his church, the best part of it, and not think to minister to his providence by a violation of the least of his precepts. For no such pretence, how specious soever, will allow a man to leap over the bounds of his profession, nor justify St. Peter himself in taking up the sword, though for the defence and rescue of his Master: the greatest and the warmest zeal being but a weak and a cold plea for one who acts without a commission. Uzzah, we know, was struck dead for but offering to take hold of the ark, then shaking and tottering, though out of a pious concern to keep it from falling. But it seems, the act was unwarrantable; and being so, the purpose of the heart could not excuse the error of the hand. He went beyond his duty, and God needed not his help.

And so we may be sure it is in all God's other commands. The infinitely wise lawgiver foresaw and weighed all possible emergent cases, which might any ways be alleged in exception to the binding power of any of his laws. That is to say, God by a full, clear, and comprehensive grasp of his immense, all-knowing wisdom, perfectly foreknew and considered all the good which men could pretend to compass or bring about by disobeying his laws, and all the evil which they were capable of suffering for obeying them; and yet notwithstanding both, he thought fit to fix his laws absolute and peremptory, and without any limitations, exceptions, or reserves; an evident demonstration, doubtless, that God intended that our obedience should be every whit as absolute as his laws, and that when he gives a command, he does by no means allow us to assign the measures of its obligation.

But the truth is, be the case how and what it will, men care not for suffering (which is the only grand and unanswerable argument against passive obedience that I know of), and from hence alone it is, that while men fly from suffering, they are so fatally apt to take sanctuary in sin: that is, in other words, to go to the devil to deliver them out of temptation. For so men certainly do, where suffering is the temptation, and sin must be the deliverance.

3. To choose or submit to the commission of a lesser sin to avoid the commission of a greater (which a man finds himself tempted to), ought by no means to be reckoned amongst those ways whereby God delivers men from temptation. This particular head may seem at first to coincide with the former, but is in truth very different from it. Forasmuch as the former considered sin is sometimes made use of for an escape out of a temptation founded in and springing from some temporal suffering, which a man would rather sin than fall into or continue under; whereas here we consider it as a means to defeat a temptation, by our choosing to commit one sin rather than another. But this also, howsoever it may possibly carry with it something more of art and finesse than the other former; yet, as we shall now show, has no more to justify or plead for it than that has: it being nothing else but a leaving of the broad way to hell for a narrow, and perhaps a smoother, but still leading to the same place.

And the reason, that no sin, though never so small, can be a warrantable and allowed means to prevent the commission of a greater, is, because no man can be brought into such a condition as shall or can put him under any necessity of sinning at all. That the case indeed may be such, that it shall render it very difficult for a man to come off without sin, is and must be readily granted; but for all that, no difficulty of any duty can take off the obligation to it, how many soever it may fright from the practice of it.

I have heard it reported (and it is a story not unknown) of a certain monk or prelate, who for a long time together was continually urged and solicited, or rather worried and pursued with three foul and horrid temptations, viz. to commit murder, or incest, or to be drunk; till at length, quite wearied out with the restless, vexatious importunity of the tempter, he pitches upon the sin of drunkenness, as the least of the three, to avoid his solicitation to the other two. This was the course he took to rid himself of a vehement temptation. But the tempter, who was much the better artist of the two, knew how to make the very same course he took to decline it, an effectual means to push it on and enforce it. For having once prevailed and carried his point so far as to bring him to be drunk, he quickly brought him in the strength thereof to commit both the other sins too. Such are

we, when God abandons us to ourselves and our own deluded and deluding judgment. Whereas had this poor wretch (if this story of him be real, and not a parable only) under his unhappy circumstances betaken himself to frequent prayer and fasting, with a vigilant and severe shunning all occasions of sin, such especially as either his natural temper or his unactive way of living put him in most danger of; I dare undertake, that following such a course he should neither have worn out his knees with praying, nor his body with fasting, before God would have given him an answer of peace, and a full conquest over his temptations. To which method may be added one instruction more, and that of no less sovereign influence in the case now before us than all of them together: viz. that we should upon no terms account any sin small; for whatsoever it may be reckoned, if compared with others of a higher guilt and malignity, yet still, considered absolutely in itself, it is not so small, but that it is an act of rebellion against the supreme Lord and governor of the universe by a direct violation of his law; not so small, but that by the same law it merits damnation to the sinner in the eternal destruction of his soul and body; nor, lastly, so small, but that as it merits, so it would actually and infallibly inflict the same upon him, had not the Son of God himself shed his blood and laid down his very life both as a satisfaction for the sin, and a ransom for the sinner. And if all this must be owned and submitted to as uncontrollable truth, from what topic of reason or religion can the most acute disputant argue for the smallness of any sin? Nevertheless, admitting (without granting) that a sin were never so small, yet certain it is, that the greatest and the foulest sins, which the corrupt nature of man is capable of committing, generally enter upon the soul by very small and scarce observable instances at first. So that of all the courses which a man in such a case can take, this of capitulating, and, as it were, making terms with the devil, is the most senseless and dangerous: no man having ever yet driven a saving bargain with this great trucker for souls, by exchanging guilts, or bartering one sin for another.

It is too well known, how it was with a most virtuous and excellent prince (if we may be suffered to pay a due honour to that glorious name, which to the astonishment and scandal of all good men has been so vilified and run down of late): it is known, I say, what a struggle his pious and truly tender conscience had with itself, when he was urged to sign the death of a faithful and great minister, and how far his heart was from going along with his hand in signing that fatal act. Nevertheless thus pressed (as he was on all sides), he was prevailed upon at last to throw an innocent life over-board, to secure the whole government from that terrible national storm, which seemed at that time to threaten all. But what was the issue and result of this woful expedient, which yet none more deeply regretted and repented

of than that blessed prince himself? Why, the result and natural effect of it was, that the flame (intended thereby to be stifled and extinguished) broke out and raged thereupon ten times more violently, and the devil and his faction took their advantage, and carried all before them, more and more audaciously, never ceasing, till they had brought his royal head to the block, overturned both church and state, and laid our laws and liberties, with every thing that was great, honourable, or sacred throughout the whole kingdom, in the dust.

This was the consequence of an unjustifiable act for preventing a greater mischief (as some judged): which, no doubt, had it not been taken, but instead thereof innocence had been resolutely protected, and Providence humbly relied upon, things could never have come to that deplorable issue which they were brought to, and which it is to be feared that we and our posterity may for some ages rue. For according to the course of God's justice in his government of the world, there is but too much ground to think, that so horrid a rebellion and regicide have not yet been so fully accounted for, but that there remains a long and a black score still to be paid off; it being so usual, as well as just with God, where the guilt of a people is high and clamorous, to revenge the practices of the fathers upon the children, succeeding into and avowedly persisting in the same principles, which produced them. God has owned it for his rule, and that for more generations than one; and it is not to be presumed that he will balk an established rule for our sakes.

Such we see have been the false and fallacious methods, whereby some have so wretchedly deceived themselves: besides which, it has been likewise observed of some others, who have been so unfortunate as to have their dependence upon persons as much wickeder as greater than themselves, that they have complied with them in lesser irregularities to induce the grandee, out of mere good-nature, forsooth, not to press his poor dependant to fouler and more frightful enormities. But alas! this is a way which never takes: for such great ones in all their debauches will be attended upon through thick and thin, and care not for any but a thorough-paced companion in their vices; since no other can give them any countenance in their lewdness, which is the chief thing they drive at and desire. And therefore this also will be found as senseless and absurd a project to elude the tempter, as any of the former, and seldom or never succeeds but to an effect quite contrary to what was designed. For from lesser to greater has been ever accounted a very easy and natural passage, especially in sin. And he who suffers the devil to be his rider must not think always to jog on softly and slowly even in the dirtiest road, but must expect to be sometimes put upon his full career, and neither be suffered to choose his own way or his own pace. In a word, he who ventures deliberately to com-

mit a less sin in order to his avoidance of a greater, does certainly bring himself under the guilt of one, and puts himself in the next disposition to the other. And therefore this can be none of those ways by which God delivers men out of temptation.

4. If it be the prerogative and proper work of God to deliver and bring men out of temptation, let no man, when the temptation is founded in suffering (how careful soever he may and ought to be of entering into it), be so solicitous how to get out of it, as how to behave himself under it. For the former being God's work, may be best left to his care; it is the latter only which belongs to the man himself, and let him but make good his own part, and he may rest assured that God will not fail in his.

And to this purpose, and for the comfort of every one under temptation, let this be observed as a great truth; that no man's suffering is properly and formally his sin (how much soever it might be occasioned by it); and withal, that the whole time a man is under a temptation without consenting to it, he is really and truly a sufferer by it. The tempter indeed dogs and pursues him close, and consequently must needs vex and afflict him proportionably; but still no man is ruined by being pursued by his enemy, but by being taken; and the huntsman (as hard as he may follow the chase) does not always carry his game. It is the tempted person's duty, no doubt, to fence, and strive, and oppose the temptation with all the art, as well as resolution, that he can; but nevertheless it is not his sin, if he cannot wholly rid himself of it. A sturdy beggar may weary me, but he cannot force me. He may importune my charity, but he cannot command my purse. And if in all our spiritual combats with our great enemy the tempter, this one rule were but impartially considered, and as strictly followed, it is incredible to imagine what a vast deal of guilt and mischief it would prevent in the world. It would prevent all that can arise from rashness and impatience, from a man's confidence in himself, and his diffidence in God; qualities that would advance the creature to the prerogative of God, and bring down God to the level of the creature. In a word, it would keep men from daring to snatch God's work out of his hand, from audaciously carving for themselves, or expecting God's mercies upon any but his own terms. It would keep them quiet even upon the rack, silent and patient under all the arts and engines of cruelty, and in the sorest distresses they can groan under; fearful how they caught at a deliverance, before God (who alone knows the proper seasons of mercy, and understands men better than they can themselves) saw them fit for it. In fine, according to that of the prophet, Isa. xxviii. 16, "He who believeth will not make haste;" that is, he who founds his belief in his reason, will not sacrifice it to the transports of his passion; but rather (as Moses bade the Israelites in a condition they thought desperate) "stand still and see the salvation of God," than fly to such false methods of escape, as

shall both assure and hasten his destruction. Nothing so much entitles a tempted person to relief from above, as a steady, composed, and unwearied looking up for it; a qualification always attended with such a peculiar greatness and firmness of mind, as the goodness of God never yet did, nor will, nor indeed can desert. In every arduous and difficult enterprise, action, all own, must begin the work, and courage carry it on; but it is perseverance only which gives the finishing stroke. If a city be besieged by an enemy, a bold and brisk sally now and then may give a present repulse to the besiegers, but it is constancy and continuance that must raise the siege; and consequently in such cases, where the assault is frequent, and the opposition long, he who stands it out bids as fair for victory as he who fights it out; and nothing can be more pusillanimous or more fatal than a hasty surrender. Promises of succour (if not too long delayed) often inspire courage even where they find none. And therefore no man of judgment, if but with a competent supply of spirit to second it, would, in so high a concern as that of his soul, part with his hope before his life; having so particular a promise to support the one, and only the common protections of Providence to guard the other. But then on the other side, if his strength lie here, and this be his case, must it not be inexpressibly senseless and irrational, for one who owns a dependence upon God for his deliverance, to have recourse to the devil for the way and means of it? That man, no doubt, who makes his duty to God the sole measure of his dependence upon him, can never (be his straits what they will) be so much enslaved and insulted over, as to think it worth his while to purchase his liberty with the sale of his conscience, or to quit his passive obedience (with the inward comforts always accompanying an oppressed innocence) for the most active, thriving, and successful rebellion. For let a temporal suffering be never so sharp, whosoever will needs be his own deliverer, and that in his own time, and his own way also; that man first distrusts God, and then defies him, and not only throws off his yoke, but throws it at him too. For the great Lord and governor of the world will be as much obeyed, trusted, and relied upon, while he visits and afflicts, as while he embraces and supports us; while his rod is upon us, as while his staff is under us. And in the very worst circumstances which he can be in, it will be hard to prove that our allegiance to the King of kings (according to the new, modish, whig doctrine relating to our temporal kings) is only conditional.

5. The fifth and last corollary or conclusion deducible from the foregoing particulars, is, that there can be no suffering or calamity whatsoever, though never so terrible and grievous to human nature, but may be endured without sin; and if so, may be likewise made a means whereby God brings a man out of temptation.

As to the first part of which proposition, the Christian martyrs were a glorious and irrefragable proof of it (as has been before observed); the torments they endured were as horrid and exquisite as the wit of man could then invent, or now comprehend; nor were they more for their peculiar strangeness unaccountable, than for the variety of their kinds innumerable. The whole history of the primitive church is but a continued martyrology; in a word, this noble army of martyrs were (as the apostle tells us, Heb. xi. 35—37) "cruelly mocked and scourged, racked and tortured, slain with the sword, or rather butchered, burnt, and sawn asunder;" and in a word, what not? All this, I say, and a great deal more, they undauntedly suffered, and triumphed over; and the same grace which enabled them to bear such barbarities, enabled them also to bear them without sin; the fire indeed consumed them, but the smoke could not blacken them. All which being as to matter of fact unquestionable, it must needs be an argument of the clearest and most allowed consequence, that if such inhumanities actually have been borne, it is certain that they may be borne. Experience (which answers, or rather annihilates all objections) has made good the antecedent, and nothing can keep off the consequent. In the meantime, for my own part, I must confess myself wholly unable to believe that such monstrous cruelties could ever have been endured, but in the strength of something supernatural and divine, something which raised and bore human nature above itself, something which gave it a kind of inward armour of proof: mere flesh and blood, God knows, being but a pitiful, weak thing, and by no means a match equal to such encounters.

From all which we see and learn, how wholly different the wise and gracious methods of God are from those of poor silly mortals. The way of the world is for men to rush into sin, to keep or bring themselves out of misery; but God's method is, sometimes to bring men into worldly misery, to keep them from sin, and thereby rescue them from damnation. And this is most certainly true, that no evil, how afflictive soever, is or ought to be accounted intolerable, which may be made a direct means to escape one intolerably greater. For as there is no sort of enjoyment upon earth, but may, and often does, become the ground and scene of a temptation, so neither is there any sort of temporal misery, but may be a remedy against it. Poverty is indeed a bitter pill, but often used by the great physician of souls, as a sovereign antidote against pride, profuseness, and sensuality. Nothing sinks deeper into an ingenuous mind than disgrace, and yet God frequently makes it an effectual cure of vain-glory, arrogance, and ambition. Sickness is a tedious and vexatious trial, eating up and consuming the vigour and spirit both of body and mind; and yet the surest and best course, by which God beats down the rage of lust and the brutish furies of intemperance. And lastly, death itself, which nature fears and flies from as its

dreadfullest and greatest enemy, is yet the grand instrument in the hand of mercy to put an end to sin and sorrow, and a final period to all temptations.

And thus at length I am come near a close of what I had to discourse upon this great and important subject of temptation; indeed so important, that, whereas that best of prayers prescribed and left us by our Saviour (as the standing form and pattern for his church to pray by for ever) consists in all but of six petitions; this against temptation makes one of that small number: a clear demonstration doubtless of what infinite concern it is to all who know how to value their eternal state and condition, to guard against it, and to be delivered from it. For so much, I dare aver, may with great truth be affirmed of the malignity of it (and more and worse can hardly be said), that greater numbers have been destroyed by it, than repentance ever saved. For it is this which has peopled hell, and made the devil's dominions large and populous; this which has carried the trophies of his black conquests as far and wide as the corruption of man's nature has spread itself, and the sin of Adam extended its contagion; this, whereby that avowed enemy of God and man has done such terrible execution upon souls: for were it not for his art and skill to insinuate, his power could do nothing to destroy; that being his sure and long tried method, for getting hold of the will, and seizing the affections, and so drawing the whole man after him, which by downright force he could never do. In short, according to the poet's expression, *populo dat jura volenti*, he brings men to obey and serve him spontaneously; and further than this he cannot go, nor lead any into the bottomless pit, but such as are as willing to follow as he to lead; a woful way of perishing certainly, and the very sting, not of death only, but even of damnation itself.

Nor is this all whereby he carries on his work, but he has yet this further advantage over men, that being a spirit, he can convey himself into, and possess himself of the chief instruments of the soul's operations, the spirits; and this without the man's discerning that he does so. For though indeed when God permits him to exert his mischievous power upon the bodies of men (as he did upon many in the days of our Saviour), it must needs in that case be discernible enough where and of whom the evil spirit has taken possession; yet where he employs his malice only in a spiritual way, by secret but powerful instigations of their corrupt nature to wicked actions (as for the most part he does now-a-days), it is hard, if possible, to distinguish truly and exactly what proceeds from bare inherent corruption, and what from diabolical impulse and infusion; but no doubt in many instances it proceeds from both, and from the latter more especially, that being always more impetuous, and hurrying the soul with a more violent bias to the commission of sin, than if left

merely to its own inclinations, it would probably have been carried out to. And thus it is with men frequently; they find within themselves a motion both sensible and forcible, while the spring of it is invisible, and so run on violently, not aware in the meantime who it is that drives them, or what it is that he drives at.

These, and many more, are the advantages which the tempter has over the sons of men, partly from the spirituality of his own nature, and partly from the grossness and imbecility of theirs; to which if we join his incredible sagacity, to spy out every the least opportunity offered him, and his implacable malice to pursue and make use of it, to the utter supplanting us, and that in no less an interest than that of our immortal souls (in comparison of which, the whole world is but a trifle), it must needs hold all thoughtful minds under such continual agonies and misgiving reflections, that although we may escape hell hereafter, he will be sure, if he can, to give us a severe taste of it here.

But what! must all advantages then lie like a dead, or rather like a killing weight, wholly on the tempter's side, and no remedies to encounter them be found in ours? God forbid; for then we must look upon our case, not only as dangerous, but desperate, and give over the conflict as absurd, where all resistance is vain, and the conquest impossible. But on the contrary, as God of his great wisdom has not been wanting to forewarn and assure men that temptations will attend them, so neither has he been failing of his equal goodness to prescribe the proper ways, means, and methods, whereby to fence against them; which, as the several particulars thereof (each of them severally adapted to the several states, tempers, and conditions of men) are for their vast variety (upon the matter) innumerable, so they are nevertheless every one of them directly reducible to, and fully comprehensible under these two grand general heads (prescribed by the best and surest guide of souls, our Saviour himself), watchfulness and prayer: and accordingly, as I hinted before, I shall treat of them distinctly by themselves, as the proper materials of my following discourse upon the same subject (though from another text), with which I shall conclude all that I had proposed to deliver upon this weighty, useful, and highly concerning point of temptation.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c., be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

PART VII.

WATCHFULNESS AND PRAYER A SECURITY FROM TEMPTATION.

MATTHEW XXVI. 11.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.

As the life and business of a Christian in this world is certainly to flesh and blood a thing of great difficulty, and, considering the opposition which it is sure to meet with, of equal danger; so this appears in nothing more than in its being represented by one of the most difficult and dangerous things in human life, which is war; 1 Tim. i. 18, "This charge I commit unto thee," says Paul to Timothy, "that thou mightest war a good warfare." And as the difficulty and danger of war is to be measured partly by the high worth of the thing fought for, and partly by the power and policy of the enemy to be fought with; so the eternal invaluable interest of an immortal soul on the one side, and the arts and strength of a mighty, subtle, and implacable spirit on the other, are but too full a demonstration, with what difficulty and danger the soul is to manage and maintain this spiritual conflict.

And therefore as all war is to be carried on partly by our own strength, and partly by that of allies and auxiliaries called in to our aid and assistance; so in this Christian warfare the things which properly answer those two, are watchfulness and prayer; forasmuch as by watchfulness we exert and employ our strength, and by prayer we engage God's: and if ever victory and success attend us in these encounters, these two must join forces, heaven and earth must be confederate; and when they are so, the devil himself, as strong as he is, and as invincible a monarch as he would be thought to be, may yet be forced to go off with a *pluribus impar*, and to quit the field with frustration and a baffle.

I. In the first place then, we will speak of *watchfulness*, as the first of the two great defensatives against temptation, here prescribed in the text, "watch and pray." In giving an account of which, as the foundation of the expression is a metaphor, so the prosecution and further illustration of it must (in a great measure at least) be metaphorical also. And consequently, as it relates to the soul waging and carrying on this spiritual war with the

tempter and his temptations, it imports in it these five following particulars. As,

1. First of all, watching imports a strong, lively, abiding sense and persuasion of the exceeding greatness of the evil which we watch and contend against. Sense of danger is the first step to safety, and no man watches but to secure and defend himself. Watching is a troublesome and severe work, and wise men would not willingly trouble themselves to no purpose. A combatant must first know and dread the mischief of a blow, before he will fence against it; he must see it coming with his eye, before he will ward it off with his hand.

To be always upon the guard, hungry and restless, expecting the enemy, and liable to be killed every minute, only to secure the life of others, must needs be a very afflicting discipline; and no man would spend the night upon the sentry, who knew that he might spend it as safely in his bed. "Had the good man of the house known of the thief's coming," as our Saviour observes, Matt. xxiv. 43, "he would have watched;" he would have kept his eyes open and his door shut: for though to break one's sleep, when nature importunately calls for it, be something grievous, yet to have one's house broken open, and to be spoiled of one's goods, and perhaps of one's life too, is much worse. The sight of danger is stronger than the strongest inclinations to rest; and no man could with any heart go to sleep, who fully believed that he should wake in another world.

Accordingly, let a man in every temptation consider the evil which is designed him, and is certainly coming towards him, and that (if reason governs) will make him readily digest a less pain, to secure himself from an infinitely greater. But men slight and dally with temptation, because they are not really persuaded that there can be so much evil at the bottom of that which looks so fair at top. But the evil which lies lurking under a temptation is intolerable and inexpressible. The design of it is, by leading thee from sin to sin, to harden thy heart, and to debauch thy conscience, and seal thee up under a reprobate sense; and when the tempter has brought things to this pass, he knows he has a man sure enough; he has the sinner in chains, whensoever may be the time of his execution.

A temptation presents itself to thee dressed and painted, and set off according to thy own false heart's desire; and the evil spirit is pressing thee to a compliance with it, and the good Spirit of God and thy own conscience would keep thee off from it; God is urgent on the one side, and the tempter busy on the other, and thy heart is warmly solicited on both: now consider in this critical push, which way it inclines, and what the issue may be, if the tempter should carry thy choice. Possibly if the blessed motions of God's Spirit dissuading thee from sin be refused now, this may be the last address the Spirit may make

to thee, the last time it may ever knock at the door of thy heart. And then what follows? Why, blindness of mind, stupidity of conscience, deadness of affection to all that is good, and a daring boldness in sin; which are as certain forerunners of the soul's destruction, as buds and blossoms are the foretellers of fruit, or the sentence of condemnation the harbinger of death.

Now if a man would have these terrible effects always fresh upon his spirit, it is impossible but he should be willing to be at any pains to intrench and fortify himself against such invasions. I have heard of a criminal, who endured the bitterest torments of the rack with incomparable resolution, which if a malefactor endures without confessing his crime (according to the custom of those countries where this trial is used) he escapes death. And being asked, how he could strengthen his spirit to endure such horrid pains, Why, says he, before I was to ascend the rack, I caused the picture of a gibbet to be drawn upon my foot, and still as my pains grew higher, I fixed my eye upon that; and so the fear and abhorrence of dying at the gibbet, if I confessed, enabled me with silence to master and overcome the tortures of the rack without confession. In like manner, when a man is at any time accosted with a temptation, a sly, pleasing, insinuating temptation, so that to turn away from it is extremely irksome to corrupt nature, and to oppose and defy it resolutely much more; so let him while he is thus casting one eye upon the difficulty of resisting it, cast the other upon the dismal consequences of being overcome by it. Let him look upon the slavery and the vassalage which it will subject him to here, and the ruin, dreadful and never-ending torments, which it will infallibly bring him to hereafter. And then let but common sense be his counsellor, and it will quickly reconcile him to all the fatigues of watching and striving, and all the rigours of mortification; and even self-love itself will make them with both arms embrace all these austerities, and ten thousand more, rather than give up the combat, and lie down in eternal sorrow. Let him but once come to this positive, decretory result with himself: either I must watch and strive, and fence against this detestable sin and temptation, or I am lost; I must fight, or I must die; resist and stand it out, or perish and sink for ever: I say, let the case be but thus impartially put and driven home, and we may safely venture the greatest epicure and the most profligate sinner in the world, indeed any thing that wears the name of a man, to judge and choose for himself.

2. Watching imports a diligent consideration, and survey of our own strength and weakness, compared with that of our enemy. Let a man know himself strong before he ventures to fight; and if he finds himself weak, it will concern him either to fence or fly. Wise combatants will measure swords before they engage: and a discreet person will learn his own weaknesses

rather by self-reflection than by experience. For to know one's self weak only by being conquered, is doubtless the worst sort of conviction.

The greatest and most fatal miscarriages in all war are from these two things, weakness and treachery; and a subtle enemy will certainly serve his turn by one or both of them. And as it is too evident that weakness, as such, can be no match for strength, so strength itself must become a prey to weakness, where treachery has the management of it. Now let a man know that he carries both these about him, and that in a very deplorable degree. And,

(1.) For weakness; his heart is extremely unable to withstand or repel a sinful object suitably proposed. For so much as there is of corruption whether natural or moral in any one, so much there is of weakness. "Since thou dost these things, how weak is thy heart!" says the prophet Ezekiel, xvi. 30. Sin is the greatest weakness in the world; and what a pitiful thing does it render the stoutest heart upon the assault of a mighty temptation! Just like "a reed shaken with the wind," or like a bulrush, yielding and bending itself under the torrent of a mighty stream; so far from being able to stem or conquer it, that it is not so much as able to show its head.

This therefore let a man always think upon, let him still consider his weakness, and compare it with the wit and strength of him who comes against him; and if he duly weighs and considers this, he will find that weakness can have no other support in nature but watchfulness. He who is not strong enough to beat back a blow, ought to be quick-sighted enough to decline it. But,

(2.) This is not all; there is not only weakness, but also treachery in the case; Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart of a man is deceitful above all things:" and so great is the deceitfulness of it, that the tempter never assails a man, but he is sure of a party within him. The poor man has not only one arm too feeble to resist his enemy, but (which is worse) he has the other ready to embrace him. And then, as it falls out in a siege, if weakness abandons the walls, and treachery opens the gates, the enemy must needs enter and carry all before him.

Let a man therefore, in his spiritual warfare, draw another argument for vigilance from hence, that he carries something about him which is like to do him more mischief than any thing that can annoy him from without: that he has a close, domestic, bosom enemy, more dangerous than the bitterest and most avowed adversary, whose open and professed defiances may pass for humanity and fair play, in comparison of the sly, hollow, and fallacious arts of the corresponding traitor within.

The truth is, in most of the transactions of human life, the cruellest and most killing blows given both to persons and socie-

ties, have been from some amongst themselves. Hardly any government or constitution comes to confusion, but by some hungry vipers, which were conceived and bred in her own bowels, and afterwards gnawed their way through them; hardly any church (though in never so flourishing a condition) is destroyed, but by the help of some wretches, who first eat her bread, and perhaps wear her honours, and then "lift up their heel against her;" suck themselves fat with her milk, and then stab her to the heart, through the breast which gave it. Such oftentimes has been the fate of the greatest things: they have been ruined from within, which no force abroad could shake. A bullet from an enemy often goes beside a man, and so spares him; but an imposthume in his head, or an apoplexy, strikes him dead.

Now what I have here remarked by way of illustration, from such cases as these, let a man be assured that he is in danger of finding fatally verified upon himself in the spiritual war, carried on by the tempter against him. For it is his own heart, his own false and base heart, which he is chiefly to watch against. The very instruments of watching (if not looked to) may sometimes betray him; and one eye had need to keep a watch over the other. And therefore "God defend me from myself," ever was, and is, and will be a most wise and excellent petition.

Every man (as I may so speak) has a wolf in his breast, which, if not prevented, will be sure to devour him. Let him therefore take heed and be wakeful; let him neither give rest to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids; for as they shut, so the tempter takes him, still directing his arrows rather by our eyes than by his own. This is our case; and surely if ever it concerns us to watch, it should be against an enemy whose malice is such, that he will not, and whose nature is such, that he cannot sleep.

3. Watchfulness implies a close and thorough consideration of the several ways by which temptation has at any time actually prevailed, either upon ourselves or others. He who would encounter his enemy successfully, should acquaint himself with his way of fighting, which he cannot do but by observation and experience. Great captains should be good historians, that so by recollecting the various issues and events of battles, they may see in several instances, by what arts and methods the victory has been gained on one side, and by what failures and miscarriages it has been lost on the other. As for instance, such an army perished by ambuscade; such a battle was lost by such an oversight or fault in conduct; such a strong place, for want of men or courage, was taken by assault and storm; such a castle was surprised by such a stratagem; and such a one was undermined, and had its walls laid flat with the ground, and delivered, but not given up; and lastly, another, by a surer way than all, sold.

In like manner in this spiritual warfare let the soul watch against an assault, against a surprise, and against the close subter-

raneous actings of its restless enemy; for ruin and destruction has entered by every one of these ways; and therefore take heed, that whilst thou art expecting an assault, the enemy steals not upon thee with a stratagem, or overreaches thee by a parley, when he cannot overmatch thee by force. And thus a sagacious reflection upon what has been done, is the surest way to establish solid and certain rules what to do. For though persons vary, yet cases are generally the same, as being founded in the nature of things; and it is eternally true, that the same method will be always applicable to perfectly the same case, as things that are cast into the same mould will certainly take the same figure. Therefore, I say, let the watchful Christian consider what has been the issue and effect of the tempter's arts and methods both upon himself and others.

(1.) And first for himself; every man does or should know the plagues of his own heart, and what false steps he has made in the several turns and periods of his Christian course; by what means he fell, and upon what rocks he split. I say, every rational, thinking, reflecting man must needs know this: for he who has the mind of a man, must remember; and he who remembers what has fallen out, will be watchful against what may. He will carry his eye backward and forward, and on every side, when he knows that the danger moves so too. For though possibly, in dealing with friends, it may not always be thought so commodious to look backwards (the rule of a great prince, one really great), yet in dealing with enemies one would think it the concern of the stoutest soldiers to look backwards sometimes, for fear no old sly enemy should come behind him, and knock out his brains before he is aware; and it is certain that he will hardly be the wiser for that: for it will be too late to watch when his head is low, or to make use of his sword when he has no hand to hold it.

He who shall make true and accurate reflections upon his past life, and observe by what secret avenues and passes the temptation has entered and broken in upon him, shall find that there have been some sorts of things, persons, companies, and actions, which perhaps he never ventured upon in all his life, but he brought away matter of repentance from them, and it was well if God gave him the grace of it too.

Now let such a one look upon all these as so many engines planted against him by the devil, and accordingly let him fly from them, as he would from the mouth of a cannon or the breath of a pest-house; assuring himself that the same poison will still have the same operation, and that the same stone which gave him so desperate a fall once, if he stumbles at it again, will be as apt to give him another: but then, if notwithstanding such frequent and fatal trials, he will still run himself upon the same mischief which he has so terribly felt, and fatally fallen by,

he must know that though his old enemy the devil tempted him the first time, yet his worse enemy, himself, tempts him the second. And will that man pretend to watch, whom neither sense, smart, nor experience can awaken? who, while he feels blow after blow, will not be persuaded that he is struck. But when it comes to this, destruction must convince, where danger cannot admonish. But then,

(2.) In the next place; let the watchful Christian carry his eye from himself to others, and observe with what trick and artifice the tempter has practised upon them. And for this, how many tragical stories and doleful complaints may you hear of persons, sometimes of great hope and reputation, yet after a while utterly fallen from both, and plunged into the very sink and dregs of all debauchery! And what account do men give us of so wretched a change? Why of some you shall be told, that while they were under the eye and wing of their parents, they were modest, tractable, and ingenuous, sober in their morals, and serious in their religion. But alas! either they were first unhappily planted in some place of ill and vicious education, where the devil and his agents infused such diabolical filth and poison into their hearts, that no discipline or advice, no sermons or sacraments could ever after antidote or work it out. Or if, through the singular mercy of Providence, such persons escape the first taint and venom of ill breeding, and so thereby make one further step into the world, with all the advantages of a fair character and a fair esteem; yet generally not long after, by the insinuations of that old pander and trepanner of souls, it is odds but you shall hear that some of them either fall into villanous and lewd company, or light into loose and debauched families, or take to some ensnaring employments, which quickly wear off the first tenderness of their hearts, and bring them to a callous hardness and sturdiness in vice; till at length, stripped even of common civility, as well as abandoned by morality, they come to launch out into the deeps of sin, to drink and whore, and scoff at religion; and so by an uncontrolled progress through all the several stages and degrees of vice, commence at last fashionable and complete sinners.

Now when the watchful Christian shall stand by and observe this dismal catastrophe of things, when he shall see that *proximus ardet Ucalegon*, surely it will be high time for him to look about him, and to conclude that the fire which has already burnt down his next neighbour's house, will assuredly catch at his. Let him therefore watch and stand upon his guard against all those forementioned encroaching mischiefs, which have made such a woful havoc of souls even before his eyes. Let him neither send son nor friend to the stews or the play-house banditti, to Sodom or Gomorrah for education. Let him make no friendships or acquaintance with those whom nothing will satisfy but to go to hell with them for company; let him have nothing to do with

any house or family (though never so great and so much in power) where the devil is major domo, and governs all; and lastly, let him not follow any employment or course of life which may work immoderately upon any of his passions, which may swell his hopes, feed his lust, or heighten his ambition. In a word, let him look with horror upon all these high roads to hell, as the man did upon the passage to the lions' den, where he beheld with trembling the footsteps of innumerable who had gone in, but of none who had returned from thence. And this is truly to be watchful, for a man thus to secure and make good his own standing, by considering how and whereby others have fallen; no wisdom being so sure, and so much a man's own, as that which is bought; and none so cheap, and yet withal so beneficial, as that which is bought at another's cost.

4. Watchfulness implies a continual actual intention of mind upon the high concern and danger which is before us, in opposition to sloth, idleness, and remissness. "Stand," says the apostle, "having your loins girt about," Eph. vi. 14. The grand security of a warrior is to be always ready. While the bow is bent, it is still fit for execution; but if the enemy comes and finds that unbent, and the armour off, the man is destroyed and run down before he can either bend the one or put on the other: and then it will be to little purpose to cry out, "Who would have thought this!" For the fool's thought comes always too late, too late to rescue, though time enough to reproach him. There is ever some gross neglect in an army when they come to have their quarters beaten up; for an enemy rarely ventures at this, but where he knows his advantage, and that one enemy can never take, till the other is fool enough to give.

We have a notable, but sad instance, of a supine, careless people, immersed in sloth and ease, and of the terrible fate which attended them in that condition. For in Judges xviii. 7, it is said of the inhabitants of Laish, that "they dwelt careless, and after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and had no business with any man." But what follows? Why, some it seems were resolved to have business with them, though they would have none with others; for the children of Dan, we read, came, and in the midst of this profound quiet and security fell upon them, burnt down their city, and put them all to the sword. The text says expressly of them in two several places, that they were secure, but the event shows that they were far from being safe.

In like manner when David and Abishai came and found Saul with his troops round about him all asleep (a most warlike and fit condition, you will say, for one upon the pursuit of an enemy), 1 Sam. xxvi. 7, 8, Abishai thereupon thus bespeaks David, "This day hath God delivered thine enemy into thy hands; let me therefore smite him with the spear to the earth at once, and

I will not smite him twice." See here the danger of a drowsy warrior; but it was well for his royal drowsiness, that he found him his true friend, whom he pursued as his mortal enemy: for had his old back friends the Philistines found him in such a posture, they would hardly have left him so; but David would do as became David, though never so ill used by Saul.

Another instance I have met with in story not much unlike this, of a certain general, who going about his camp in the night, and finding the watch fast asleep upon the ground, nails him down to the place where he lay, with his own sword, using this expression withal, "I found him dead, and I left him so." So that sleep, it seems, in such cases is something more than the image of death, and closes the eyes too fast ever to be opened again.

Accordingly, in this spiritual warfare let us take heed that our vigilant, active enemy find us not idle and unemployed. The soul's play-day is always the devil's working-day, and the idler the man, still the busier the tempter. The truth is, idleness offers up the soul as a blank to the devil, for him to write what he will upon it. Idleness is the emptiness, and business the fulness of the soul; and we all know that we may infuse what we will into an empty vessel, but a full one has no room for a further infusion. In a word, idleness is that which sets all the capacities of the soul wide open, to let in the evil spirit, and to give both him, and all the villanies he can bring along with him, a free reception and a full possession; whereas, on the contrary, laboriousness shuts the doors and stops all the avenues of the mind, whereby a temptation would enter, and (which is yet more) leaves no void room for it to dwell there, if by any accident it should chance to creep in; so that let but the course a man takes be just and lawful, and then the more active still the more innocent, for action both perfects nature and ministers to grace; whereas idleness, like the rust of the soul, by its long lying still, first soils the beauty, and then eats out the strength of it. In like manner, the industry of the person tempted ever supersedes that of the tempter; so that as long as the former is employed (as we hinted before) the other can have but little to do, and consequently will be hardly brought to address himself to one whose head and heart, whose eyes and ears, and all the faculties of the soul are actually taken up, and nothing at leisure to receive him; for few make visits where they are sure neither to be entertained nor let in.

Now the first, and generally the most fatal way, by which the tempter accosts a man, is by the suggestion of evil thoughts; for when the temptation is once lodged in the imagination, he knows it is in the next neighbourhood to the affections, and from the affections that it is usually no long step to the actions; and that when it once reaches them, he is pretty sure that his

work is then done. But now when the mind is thus intent upon greater and better objects, and the thoughts wholly taken up with no less a concern than that last and grand one of life and death, surely it is scarce possible for his impertinent stuff (and his temptations are no better) to find either audience or admittance; for the soul thus employed is really too busy to regard what he says, any more than a man who is contriving, studying, and beating his brain how to save his head, can be presumed to mind powdering his hair, or while he knows he is eating his last meal, to play the critic upon tastes; no doubt, whosoever is so wholly taken up can neither attend making or receiving invitations, though the tempter we own is so much a courtier, as to be always ready for both.

Let the wary Christian therefore remember, that he is *hoc agere*, that he is to keep all his hours, and, if possible, his very minutes filled up with business, and that grace abhors a vacuum in time, as much as nature does in place; and happy beyond expression is that wise and good Christian, whom, "when the tempter comes, he shall find so doing:" forasmuch as he, who is thus prepared to receive the tempter, cannot be unprepared to receive his Saviour; since, next to his soul, his time is certainly the most precious thing he has in the world, and the right spending of the one the surest and most unfailing way to save the other. But,

5. And lastly, watching implies a constant and severe temperance, in opposition to all the jollities of revelling and intemperance. We have before observed the great analogy and resemblance between the carrying on the spiritual and the temporal warfare; and accordingly as to this latter we may observe further, how whole armies have been routed and overthrown, and the greatest cities and the strongest garrisons surprised and sacked, while those who should have been watching the motion of the enemy, were sotting it at their cups, equally unmindful both of their danger and defence: for such debaucheries seldom happen either in camps or besieged towns, but their wakeful enemies, quickly getting intelligence of the disorder, come upon them on a sudden, and find them as the poet describes such, *somno vinoque sepultos;* that is to say, buried, in a manner, before dead, or rather already dead to their hands, and so scarce worthy to receive another and a nobler death from their enemies' sword: for when men have once drank themselves down, the enemy can have nothing more to do but to trample upon them.

How came Ahab with a handful of men, in comparison, to overthrow the vast insulting army of Benhadad king of Syria? Why, we have an account of it, 1 Kings xx.: "He and two and thirty kings his confederates were drinking themselves drunk in their pavilions," ver. 16; as if he had drawn together such a numerous and mighty army, headed by so many princes, only

for the glorious and warlike expedition of carousing in their tents, or to fight it out hand to hand in the cruel and bloody encounters of drinking healths; but their success was answerable, they fell like grass before the mower, cut down and slaughtered without resistance; and happy were those who had their brains so much in their heels, as to be sober enough to run away.

Accordingly in the management of our Christian warfare, so much resembling the other (as I showed before), it is remarkable, watching and sobriety are still joined together in the same precept; as Luke xxi. 34, "Take heed to yourselves," says our Saviour, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares;" which if it should, and chance to find men in such a condition, it would prove a sad conviction, that men may "eat and drink their own damnation" more ways than one. And the same injunction is repeated over and over by the apostles; as "Let us watch and be sober," says St. Paul, 1 Thess. v. 6; and "Be ye sober, and watch unto prayer," says St. Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 7; and again, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8. Of so peculiar a force is temperance against the fiercest assaults of the devil, and so unfit a match is a soaking, swilling swine to encounter this roaring lion. Concerning which it is further worth our observing, that as we read of no other creature but the swine which our Saviour commissioned the devil to enter into, so of all other brute animals there are none so remarkable for intemperance as they, did not some, I confess, of a higher species very often outdo them.

In short, he who has an enemy must watch; but there can be no such thing as watching, unless sobriety holds up the head, forasmuch as without it sleeping is not only the easiest, but the best thing that such a one can do, as being for the time of his debauch like other beasts, always most innocent when asleep, though for the same reason also I confess more in danger of being caught and destroyed before he wakes.

Let that wise and circumspect Christian therefore, who would always have a watchful eye upon his enemy, with a particular caution take heed of all intemperance; and I account that intemperance, which immediately after eating and drinking unfits a man for business, whether it be that of the body or that of the mind. It renders a man equally useless to others, and mischievous to himself; and we need say no more nor no worse of intemperance than this, that it lays him wretchedly open, even as open to throw out as to pour in, a kind of common-shore for both; it makes his own tongue his executioner, sometimes by scandalous words, and sometimes by dangerous truths, and that which is the certain consequent of both, by procuring him dangerous enemies,

unless possibly sometimes to prevent a greater mischief, the brute cries, *Peccavi,* arraigns himself, makes his folly his apology, and so, forsooth, proves himself no criminal by pleading that he was a sot. But this is but one mischief of a thousand which intemperance exposes its miserable slaves to; for I look upon this vice as a kind of mother vice, and the producing cause of infinitely more, and sensuality (which is but another name for the same thing) as the very throat of hell, or rather that broad way by which three parts of the world (at least) go to the devil.

And therefore as the pious and prudent Christian warrior will be sure to keep himself far enough from such a traitor as downright excess; so to this purpose let him, as much as possible, shun all jovial entertainments, banquetings, and merry meetings (as they are called), if they may deserve that name, which seldom fail to bring so sad an account after them; an account which will be sure to remain, when all bills are cleared, and all reckonings at the tavern paid off; so that every experienced guide of souls may truly pronounce of all such jollities, what the best guides of health observe of some meats, that it is possible indeed with great care and niceness to order and use them so, that they shall do a man no hurt, but it is certain that they can never do him good.

And we may as confidently affirm, that no wise or truly great man ever delighted in such things. The truth is, wise men slight them, as the hinderances of business, and good men dread them, as dangerous to the soul. In a word, temperance is a virtue which casts the truest lustre upon the person it is lodged in, and has the most general influence upon all other particular virtues of any that the soul of man is capable of; indeed so general, that there is hardly any noble quality or endowment of the mind, but must own temperance either for its parent or its nurse; it is the greatest strengthener and clearer of reason, and the best preparer of it for religion, the sister of prudence, and the handmaid to devotion. But we need no further proof of the sovereign value of a strict and severe temperance than this, that the temperate man is always himself; his temperance gives him the constant command of his reason, and (which is yet better) keeps him under the command of his religion; it makes him always fit and ready to answer the devil, for it takes away the very matter of the temptation, and so eludes the tempter's design, for want of materials to work upon. And for this cause no doubt it was that our Saviour, Matt. xvii. 21, told his disciples, that there were some evil spirits not to be dispossessed but by fasting, as well as prayer; and I think we may rationally enough conclude, that whatsoever fasting casts out, temperance must at least keep from entering in. It is seldom that a temptation fastens upon a man to any purpose, but in the strength of some one or other of his passions; and this is a sure observation, that where temperance overrules the appetites, there reason is ablest to command the

passions; and that till the former be done, the latter will be impracticable.

And thus I have shown what is implied in the grand duty of watchfulness, the first thing prescribed in the text, to guard us against temptation; and many more particulars might, no question, be assigned as belonging to it, but I have singled out and insisted upon only five, which for memory's sake I shall briefly repeat and sum up in a few words.

As first of all, let a man thoroughly possess his mind with a full and settled persuasion of the devilish and intolerable mischief designed him by temptation; for unless he believes it to be such, he neither will, nor rationally can watch against it.

In the next place, let him narrowly survey and inform himself of his own spiritual strength and weakness, and compare them with the forces and advantages of his enemy, and accordingly by supporting weakness with watchfulness, let him be sure to fortify the weak side, and the stronger will be the better able to defend itself.

And then, thirdly, let him wisely reflect both upon his own experience and that of others: and so observing by what arts, methods, and stratagems the tempter has heretofore prevailed upon either, let him apply what is past to what is present; and so judging of one by the other, use his utmost vigilance, that the same trick be not trumped upon him more than once.

And to this purpose, let him, in the fourth place, have his mind continually intent upon the great and pressing danger he is surrounded with, that no sloth, negligence, or remissness of spirit, open a passage to the tempter, and so betray him like a fool, between sleeping and waking, into the hands of his cruel enemy; but let him have his danger still in his eye, and still look his enemy in the face, and that is the likeliest way to look him out of countenance.

And, fifthly, and lastly, above all let him practise the strictest temperance against all kind of excess in the use of any of God's creatures, which generally proves fatal and pernicious to the soul, frequently destroying, but always wounding it.

And to enforce these two last particulars more especially, I shall only add this one true and important remark, to wit, that of all the sins and enormities which the soul of man is capable of being ensnared by, I hardly know any (except those two of covetousness and ambition) but directly rush in upon it through those two broad, open, hellish gates of idleness and intemperance. And thus from watchfulness pass we now to

II. The other great preservative and remedy against temptation prescribed in the text, which is *prayer;* "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:" the reason and necessity of which duty is founded upon the supposition of this great truth,

that it is not in the power of man to secure or defend himself against temptation, but that something above him must do it for him, as well as very often by him; and prayer is that blessed messenger between heaven and earth, holding a correspondence with both worlds, and by a happy intercourse and sure conveyance carrying up the necessities of the one, and bringing down the bounties of the other. This is the high prerogative of prayer, and by virtue of it every tempted person has it in his power to engage omnipotence itself, and every one of the divine attributes in his defence; and whosoever enters the lists upon these terms, having the Almighty for his second (let the combatants be never so unequal) cannot but come off a conqueror. A state of temptation is a state of war, and as often as a man is tempted, he is put to fight for his all; danger both provokes and teaches to pray, and prayer (if any thing can) certainly will deliver from it. And to convince men how infinitely it concerns them to fence against the danger threatened, by persevering in the duty enjoined, let them assure themselves, that there is not any condition whatsoever allotted to men in this world but has its peculiar temptation attending it, and hardly separable from it: for whether it be wealth or poverty, health or sickness, honour or disgrace, or the like, there is something deadly in every one of them, and not at all the less so for not killing the same way. Wealth and plenty may surfeit a man, and poverty starve him, but still the man dies as surely by the one as by the other. God indeed sends us nothing but what is naturally wholesome, and fit to nourish us, but if the devil has the cooking of it, it may destroy us: and therefore the divine goodness has prescribed prayer as a universal preservative against the poison of all conditions, extracting what is healing and salutary in them from what is baneful and pernicious, and so making the very poison of one condition a specific antidote against that of another. In fine, let none wonder, that prayer has so powerful an ascendant over the tempter (as mighty as he is) when God himself is not only willing, but pleased to be overcome by it; for still it is the man of prayer, who takes heaven by force, who lays siege to the throne of grace, and who, in a word, is thereby said to wrestle with God: and surely if prayer can raise a poor mortal so much above himself as to be able to wrestle with his Maker, it may very well enable him to foil the tempter. And therefore, since both our Saviour himself and his great apostle St. Paul represent prayer without ceasing as so eminent a duty, and so opportune a succour, we must needs own, that there cannot be a more pressing argument for a never-ceasing prayer than never-ceasing temptations; and therefore whatsoever our personal strengths are (as at best they can be but little), it is certain that our auxiliary forces and supplies must come in from prayer; in a word, I know no one blessing so small, which can be rationally expected without it, nor any so great but may be obtained by it.

But then to render it thus prevalent and effectual, there are required to it these two qualifications: 1. Fervency, or importunity; 2. Constancy, or perseverance.

1. And first for fervency. Let a man be but as earnest in praying against a temptation as the tempter is in pressing it, and he needs not proceed by a surer measure. He who prays against it coldly and indifferently, gives too shrewd a sign that he neither fears nor hates it; for coldness is, and always will be, a symptom of deadness, especially in prayer, where life and heat are the same thing.

The prayers of the saints are set forth in scripture at much another rate, not only by calls, but cries, cries even to a roaring and vociferation, Psalm xxxviii. 8; and sometimes by "strong cries with tears," Heb. v. 7; sometimes again by "groanings not to be uttered," Rom. viii. 26: things too big for vent, too high for expression. In fine, he who prays against his spiritual enemy as he ought to do, is like a man fighting against him upon his knees; and he who fights so, by the very posture of his fighting shows that he neither will nor can run away.

Lip devotion will not serve the turn; it undervalues the very thing it prays for. It is indeed the begging of a denial, and shall certainly be answered in what it begs; but he, who truly and sensibly knows the invaluable happiness of being delivered from temptation, and the unspeakable misery of sinking under it, will pray against it, as a man ready to starve would beg for bread, or a man sentenced to die would entreat for life. Every period, every word, every tittle of such a prayer is all spirit and life, flame and ecstasy; it shoots from one heart into another, from the heart of him who utters, to the heart of him who hears it.

And then well may that powerful thing vanquish the tempter, which binds the hands of justice, and opens the hands of mercy, and, in a word, overcomes and prevails over omnipotence itself; for, "let me go," says God to Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 26; and "let me alone," says God to Moses, Exod. xxxii. 10. One would think that there was a kind of trial of strength between the Almighty and them; but whatsoever it was, it shows that there was and is something in prayer, which he who made heaven and earth neither could nor can resist; and if this be that holy violence which heaven itself (as has been shown) cannot stand out against, no wonder if all the powers of hell must fall before it. But,

2. To fervency must be added also constancy or perseverance. For this indeed is the crowning qualification, which renders prayer effectual and victorious, and that upon great reason, as being the surest test and mark of its sincerity; for as Job observes, Job xxvii. 10: "Will the hypocrite call always upon God?" No, he does it only by fits and starts, and consequently his devotional fervours are but as the returning paroxysms of a

fever, not as the constant kindly warmths of a vital heat: they may work high for a time, but they cannot last, for no fit ever yet held a man for his whole life.

Discontinuance of prayer by long broken intervals is the very bane of the soul, exposing it to all the slights and practices of the tempter. For a temptation may withdraw for a while and return again; the tempter may cease urging, and yet continue plotting; the temptation is "not dead, but sleeps," and when it comes on afresh, we shall find it the stronger for having slept.

And therefore our Saviour casts the whole stress of our safety upon continual prayer, by a notable parable intended, as St. Luke tells us, Luke xviii. 1, to show that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" nothing being more fatally common, than for men, not receiving immediately answers to their prayers, to despond and give over, and to conclude with themselves, "as good not at all as to no purpose." A man perhaps labours under the tyranny of some vexatious lust or corruption, and being bitterly sensible of it, he sets upon it with watching and striving, reading and hearing, fasting and praying, and after all thinks he has got but little or no ground of it; and now what shall such a one do? Why, nothing else must or can be done in the case, but resolutely to keep on praying; for no man of sense who sows one day expects to reap the next. This is certain, that while any one prays sincerely against a temptation, he fights against it, and so long as a man continues fighting, though with his limbs all battered, and his flesh torn and broken, he is not vanquished; it is conquest, in the account of God, not to be overcome. God perhaps intends, that there shall be war between thee and thy corruption all thy days: thou shalt live fighting and warring, but for all that mayest die in peace; and if so, God has answered thy prayers; I say, answered them, enough to save thy soul, though not always enough to comfort and compose thy mind. God fully made good his promise to the Israelites, and they really conquered the Canaanites, though they never wholly dispossessed and drove them out.

And therefore since God will still have something remain to exercise the very best of men in this life, if thou wouldest have thy prayer against thy sin successful, in spite of all discouragements, let it be continual: let the plaister be kept on till the sore be cured. For prayer is no otherwise a remedy against temptation than as it is commensurate to it, and keeps pace with it; but if we leave off praying, before the devil leaves off tempting, we cannot be safe, we throw off our armour in the midst of the battle, and so must not wonder at the worst that follows.

In a word, present prayer is a certain guard against present temptation; but as to what may come, we cannot be assured that it will keep us from it, or support us under it.

And thus much briefly for that other great preservative against

temptation, prayer; together with its two prevailing properties, fervency and perseverance, from which all its success must come; for it is fervency in prayer which must charge the enemy, and perseverance in prayer which must conquer him.

And now, from the foregoing particulars thus discoursed of, we may learn the true cause (and it is worth our learning) why so many men, who doubtless at some times of their lives resist and make head against temptation, and have many a hard struggle and conflict with their sins, yet in the issue are worsted by them, and so live and die under the power of them; and this is not from any insufficiency in watching and prayer, as means unable to compass the end they are prescribed for, but from this, that men divide between watching and prayer, and so use and rely upon the duties separately, which can do nothing but in conjunction. For watchfulness without prayer is presumption, and prayer without watchfulness is a mockery; by the first a man invades God's part in this great work, and by the latter he neglects his own. Prayer not assisted by practice is laziness, and contradicted by practice is hypocrisy; it is indeed of mighty force and use within its proper compass, but it was never designed to supply the room of watchfulness, or to make wish instead of endeavour.

God generally gives spiritual blessings and deliverances as he does temporal; that is, by the mediation of an active and a vigorous industry. The fruits of the earth are the gift of God, and we pray for them as such; but yet we plant, and we sow, and we plough, for all that; and the hands which are sometimes lift up in prayer, must at other times be put to the plough, or the husbandman must expect no crop. Every thing must be effected in the way proper to its nature, with the concurrent influence of the divine grace, not to supersede the means, but to prosper and make them effectual.

And upon this account men deceive themselves most grossly and wretchedly, when they expect that from prayer which God never intended it for. He who hopes to be delivered from temptation merely by praying against it, affronts God and deludes himself, and might to as much purpose fall asleep in the midst of his prayers as do nothing but sleep after them. Some ruin their souls by neglecting prayer, and some perhaps do them as much mischief by adoring it; while by placing their whole entire confidence in it, they commit an odd piece of idolatry, and make a god of their very devotions. I have heard of one (and him none of the strictest livers) who yet would be sure to say his prayers every morning, and when he had done, he would bid the devil do his worst, thus using prayer as a kind of spell or charm: but the old serpent was not to be charmed thus; and so no wonder if the devil took him at his word, and used him accordingly.

And therefore to disabuse and deliver men from so killing a

mistake, I shall point out two general cases or instances, in which praying against temptation will be of little or no avail to secure men from it. As,

1st. When a man prays against any sin or temptation, and in the mean time indulges himself in such things or courses as are naturally apt to promote an inclination to that sin, such a one prays against it to no purpose. Every sin is founded in some particular appetite or inclination, and every such appetite or inclination has some particular objects, actions, or courses, by which it is fed and kept in heart. Now let no man think that he has prayed heartily against any sin, who does not do all that he can, who does not use his utmost diligence, nay, his best art and skill, to undermine and weaken his inclination to that sin. To water an ill plant every day, and to pray against the growth of it, would be very absurd and preposterous. St. Paul, we know, complained of a "body of death," and of "a thorn in the flesh," and he prayed heartily against it. But was that all? No, he also "kept under his body, and brought it into subjection," 1 Cor. ix. 27; being well assured, that unless the soul keeps under the body, the body will quickly get above the soul. If you would destroy a well entrenched enemy, cut off his provisions; and if you starve him in his strong holds, you conquer him as effectually as if you beat him in the field. But then again,

2dly. When a man prays against any sin or temptation, and yet ventures upon those occasions which usually induce men to it, he must not expect to find any success in his prayers. For would any man in his wits, who dreaded a catching distemper, converse freely with such as had it? that is, would he fly from the disease, and yet run into the infection? In like manner, do not occasions of sin generally end in the commission of sin? and if they generally end in it, must they not naturally tend to it? And if so, can men think that God ever designed prayer as an engine to counterwork or control nature, to reverse its laws, and alter the course of the universe, by suspending the natural efficiency of things, in compliance with some men's senseless and irrational petitions?

None trifle with God, and make a sport of sin, so much as those whose way of living interferes with their prayers; who pray for such or such a virtue, and then put themselves under circumstances which render the practice of it next to impossible; who pray perhaps for the grace of sobriety, and then wait daily for an answer to that prayer at a merry meeting, or the tavern. But the spirit of prayer is the spirit of prudence, a spirit of caution and conduct, and never pursues the thing it prays for in a way contrary to the nature of the thing itself.

Does a man therefore pray, for instance, against the temptation of pride and ambition? let him not thrust himself into high

places and employments, which he is neither worthy of nor fit for. Or does he beg of God to free him from the sin and slavery of intemperance? let him break off from company; let him not give up his reason, his credit, his time, and his very soul, out of complaisance (as fools call it), but let him make his own conscience, and not other men's humours, the rule he lives by, and let him stick close to it. In a word, let him resolve against all the false pleasures of luxury, and then let him keep his resolution, and his resolution shall assuredly keep him.

And this is a plain, natural, and sure course, directly leading to the thing he prays for; but the contrary is both a paradox in reason, and an imposture in religion. And believe it, we shall one day give but an ill and lame account of our watching and praying, if by an odd inversion of the command, all that we do is, first to pray against a temptation, and afterwards to watch for it.

And thus I have given you two notable instances in which men pray against temptation without any success. In short, if a man cherishes and keeps up a sinful principle or inclination within, and shuns not the occasions of sin without, his prayers and his actions supplant and overthrow one another; and God will be sure to answer him according to what he does, and not according to what he prays.

And therefore let us take heed of putting a cheat or fallacy upon ourselves, a fallacy, *à bene conjunctis ad malè divisa;* by dividing between these two great duties; and dividing, we know, in some cases, is in effect destroying, and it will prove so in this. Watchfulness and prayer are indeed principal duties, and of principal acceptance with God; but God accepts them only as he commands them, and that is, both together. God has joined them by an absolute, irreversible sanction; and what God himself has so joined, let not the devil, or our own false hearts, presume to put asunder. But let us take this both for our direction and our comfort, that proportionably as we watch, God will answer us when we pray.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON IX.

THE FOLLY OF TRUSTING IN OUR OWN HEARTS.

PROVERBS XXVIII. 26.

He who trusteth in his own heart is a fool.

THE great instrument and engine for the carrying on of the commerce and mutual intercourses of the world, is trust; without which there can be no correspondence maintained either between societies or particular persons. And accordingly being a thing of such general and immediate influence upon the affairs of mankind, there is nothing in the management of which men give such great experiments either of their wisdom or their folly; the whole measure of these being taken by the world, according as it sees men more or less deceived in their transacting with others. Certain it is, that credulity lays a man infinitely open to the abuses and injuries of crafty persons. And though a strong belief best secures the felicity of the future life, yet it is usually the great bane and supplanter of our happiness in this; there being scarce any man, who arrives to any sound understanding of himself, or his own interest, till he comes to be once or twice notably deceived by such a one, of whom he was apt to say and think, according to the common phrase, "I would trust my very life with him." And for this cause it is, that that nation which seems justly of the greatest reputation for wisdom in the western world, has vouched it for a maxim, and lived by it as a rule, *to trust nobody;* whether in so doing they deal honestly and ingenuously, they seem not much to care, being contented that it is safe.

But of all the fallacies and scurvy cheats put upon men by their trusting others, there are none so shameful, and indeed pernicious, as the baffles which men sustain by trusting themselves; which gives them but too frequent and sad an experience, that the nearest neighbours are not always the best friends. For none surely can be nearer to a man than himself, or be supposed so true and faithful to all his concerns, as the heart which beats in own breast; yet Solomon, and a greater than Solomon, which is experience, gives us infallible demonstrations that it is much otherwise; and that the heart, of all things in the world, is least to be confided in, else certainly a man's trusting of it could not thus denominate him a fool.

The words contain in them a caution or admonition against men's trusting their own hearts, upon the account of that disgraceful imputation which such a trust or confidence will in the issue bring upon them; and consequently they very naturally present these two things to our inquiry.

I. What is meant by a man's trusting his heart.

II. Wherein the folly of it consists.

I. As for the first of these: for a man *to trust his own heart*, is, in short, for him to commit and resign up the entire conduct of his life and actions to the directions of it, as of a guide, the most able and the most faithful, to direct him in all the most important matters which relate either to his temporal or his spiritual estate. For whosoever trusts another for his guide, must do it upon the account of these two qualifications to be found in him.

1. That he is able to direct and lead him. So that in this case a man must look upon every dictate of his heart as an oracle; he must look upon it as speaking to him from an infallible chair, incapable of error or mistake in any thing which it proposes to him to be followed. In a word, he must take it for the unerring measure of truth, and the most certain reporter of the mind of God.

2. A guide must be such a one as not only certainly can, but also faithfully will, give the best directions. For let a man know the way never so well, yet if he has a design not to impart that knowledge, but perhaps has more windings and turnings than the way itself, such a one is far from being a competent guide, and fit to be trusted, especially in a man's journey to eternity. So that for a man to trust his heart, is to take it for his best, his surest, and most unfailing friend, that will deal openly, clearly, and impartially with him in every thing, and give him faithful intelligence in all his affairs.

Having thus seen what is imported in a man's trusting his heart, we come now

II. In the next place to see *wherein the foolishness of it consists.* For the making out of which, we are to observe that there are two things which render a trust foolish, both of them to be considered with mutual relation to one another in this particular.

First, The value of the thing which we commit to a trust.

Secondly, The undue qualifications of the person to whose trust we commit it.

In both of which respects the confidence reposed by men in their own hearts will in the procedure of this discourse appear to be inexcusably foolish.

First of all then, as for *the thing which we commit to a trust.* We do, in a word, trust all that to our hearts which is the con-

sequence of all our actions, either in reference to this world or the other. But to explicate and draw forth this general into the several particulars wrapped up and included in it; while we rely upon the guidance of our heart, we commit these three things to the mercy of its trust. 1. The honour of God. 2. Our own felicity here. 3. The eternal concernments of our souls hereafter. All of them certainly, either jointly or severally, things too great, too high, and too concerning, to be ventured upon the rotten bottom of a false and a deceiving heart.

We shall speak of each of them distinctly.

1. First of all then, the honour of God is entrusted with the heart. So far as the manifestation of God's honour depends upon the homage of his obedient creature, so far it is at the mercy of our actions, which are at the command of the heart, as the motion of the wheels follows the disposition of the spring. God is never disobeyed but he is also dishonoured. In every act of sin, dust and ashes flings itself in the face of the Almighty, and defies him so far, that it puts him to the exercise of his vindictive justice, to prove his sovereignty and dominion over the bold offender.

Now God is capable of being honoured or dishonoured by us in three several respects.

(1.) As he is our Creator. And is it not infinitely reasonable for clay to comply with the will of the potter? for such frail vessels as men are, to be subject to their almighty artificer? For did God make us that we might spit in his face, and give us a being that we might employ it to the dishonour of him who gave it? While a man sins, he seems to be his own creator, and to own an absolute independency, as to any superior productive cause. For no understanding, judging rationally, would imagine, that a creature durst act against him who first raised him into a capacity of acting, and that even out of nothing, and could crush him into nothing again every minute. So that the honour, by which we vouch and own God for a Creator, is a result of our actions, and the conduct of them is committed to the heart.

(2.) God is capable of being honoured by us as a Lord and Governor. "If I am a master," says God, "where is my honour?" But can the rebellion of the subject declare the sovereignty of his prince? And is not every act of sin a blowing of a trumpet against heaven, and a lifting up of a standard against the Almighty? Is it not the language of every offence, "We will not have God reign over us?" Does it not trample upon his laws, and puff at the power which should revenge the violation of them? And on the contrary, is not the piety and obedience of our lives a proclaiming of God to be our king, and a recognizing of him for our great master?

For this is an obvious and easy maxim of reason, that "his servants we are, to whom we obey." Obedience is but a clearer

comment upon our allegiance. Why does God call upon us to "let our light shine before men," did not the shining of that by reflection cast a shine and a lustre upon his own glory? When "men see our good works," they are apt to glorify and acknowledge the supremacy and ruling hand of our Lord and Master in heaven.

Well it is, that it is not in the power of the most rebellious creature, by any sin and misbehaviour of his to take away the power and prerogative of God, though it may for the present be able to eclipse, slur, and so obscure it. For surely this is done, in a great measure, by every broad violation of the divine law, which seems to attempt to persuade the rest of the world, that God is not so great and so mighty a potentate as he bears himself for; since the boldness of an offender for the most part speaks the weakness of the governor.

To advance the clearness of which by instance. Pray how did David own God in the relation of a king, when by his two great sins he caused the enemies of God to blaspheme? How did the sons of Eli own him in that respect, when by the insolence and impurity of their behaviour they caused all Israel to "loathe the offerings of the Lord?" All these actions were a deposing of God from his throne, so far as his throne was placed in the heart and awful esteem of his creatures. In this respect, therefore, is the heart entrusted with God's honour.

(3.) The honour of God also, considered as our Saviour and gracious Father, is trusted to the behaviour of the heart. For does not every sin defy, and every act of obedience honour God in this capacity? Would any one take him for a son, who lifts up his heel against him to whom he should bend the knee? Or can any man be thought to own God for his Saviour, while he treats him with all the acts of hatred and hostility? By the behaviour of sinners towards God, one would think that they took him for an implacable tyrant and an enemy, for one who hated and maligned them, and consequently that the whole tenor of their life was but the acting of a continual revenge upon him for it. Natural ingenuity abhors the recompensing of a friend with all the indignities and contempts that exasperated nature passes upon an enemy. Every unworthy sinful deportment, therefore, tends to beget and foment unbeseeming apprehensions of God in the mind of his creature. Now since the actions are governed by the heart, as the great dictator and commander-in-chief of all that a man either does or desires; it follows, that the heart has that great trust reposed in it, how far God shall receive the glory due to him, as he bears these three grand relations to us, of a Creator, a Governor, and a Saviour.

2. The second thing a man trusts his heart with, is his happiness in this world: and this is twofold: 1st, temporal; 2ndly, spiritual.

1st. And first he trusts it with all his temporal comforts and felicities. It is a most known truth, that most of the miseries and calamities which befall a man in this life, break in upon him through the door of sin; frequent experience showing us how easily men sin themselves into disgrace, poverty, sickness, loss of friends, and the like; they are the direct consequents of a man's personal misdemeanors. David's adultery and murder made his enemies scorn, and his friends desert him, Psalm xxxviii. 11. It is said of them, that "they stood aloof off;" they flew from him as from a living, walking contagion. Intemperance ends in poverty, and a full belly makes an empty purse. Luxury enters upon and spoils the soul through the ruins of the body, and the bed of uncleanness prepares for the bed of sickness.

But now in all these instances of sin, which maul the sinner with these temporal disasters, the heart is the first moving spring and principle; they all flow from the prevarications of this. It is this that is the source and the fruitful womb of all the mischiefs that render this life miserable, were there no after-reckonings in another.

How cautious is every man almost of trusting his neighbour with his mind, or with his estate! because he knows how much such a one thereby gets the command and the disposal of his happiness; for he fears lest he may by this means betray his honour, and disgrace him, or undermine his estate, and ruin him: not considering how much greater a suspicion he ought to have of his own heart and temper, which may, through the unhappy bent and propensity of it, push him on upon those courses which shall irrecoverably dash him in all his outward enjoyments; and then that shall sound forth his infamy, and trumpet out his disgrace louder than the tongue of the most merciless reviler can; that shall betray him into captivity to some expensive vice, which shall grind his fortunes to powder, and leave him as bare as the oppression of a domestic tyrant, or the invasion of a foreign enemy.

Such a one ventures into lewd company, and perhaps is thereby surprised into the dishonours of intemperance, and so departs with a wound upon his reputation. Another is confident, and steps into the occasion of sin, which perhaps by degrees entangles, and at length draws him into the paths of vice and uncleanness; and that sullies the clearness of his fame, and withal makes a breach upon the serenity and content of his mind, so that he is brought to taste but little even of these temporal felicities.

Now, how comes this to pass? Why, all through the treachery of his heart, which persuaded him of those strengths which he never really had, which told him what command he had of himself under those circumstances of temptation, which yet upon trial he was unable to contest with, and which would needs make him believe, that he might "touch pitch," and yet not be "defiled,"

venture upon the occasions of sin, and yet stand secure from the sin itself. These fraudulent dealings of the heart are those impostures which plunge men into infinite calamities and inconveniences, such as embitter the enjoyment even of common life itself.

2ndly. There is yet another part of a man's happiness in this world which is spiritual, which his heart is also entrusted with, and that is, the peace of his conscience; a thing, the enjoyment of which is so valuable, and the loss so dreadful, that though it stands here reckoned but for a part of a man's felicity, yet it is of that nature, that it may well pass for the whole; for what can a man truly enjoy while he wants it? and what can he much feel the want of, while he enjoys it? It is in effect a man's whole entire happiness; such a spreading universal influence has it upon all his thoughts, actions, and affections. For while a man carries his acquitting, absolving sentence within him, and a transcript of the pardons of heaven deposited in his own breast; what storm can shake, what terror can amaze, what calamities can confound him? It is he alone who can look death and danger in the face with a rational unconcernment; for he has that which enables him to look him, who is infinitely more terrible than all these together, even a just, a holy, and sin-revenging God, in the face.

On the other side, when the glass of a man's conscience shall show him a God frowning, a law cursing, wrath and vengeance preparing, and all the artillery of heaven and earth making ready against him, what can he think, say, or enjoy in this condition? Even as much as Cain enjoyed, who lived a vagabond, and a terror to h mself; or as Belshazzar, whose joints loosed, and whose knees smote together with horror and consternation. But now, what is this which puts the scourge into the hand of conscience, thus to lash and torment a man? Why, what is it but the guilt of sin, which arms and envenoms it against the sinner? And is not sin the product of the sinner's heart? Is not this the dunghill where that snake is bred, and which gives warmth to the cockatrice's egg, till it be hatched and brought forth to the sinner's confusion? It is the heart which sows dissension between a man and his conscience, by enticing and ensnaring him into those sins, the guilt of which lies grating and gnawing upon his mind perpetually; so that he lives with pain and dies with horror, passes his days ill, and ends them worse. In every thing that a man's heart prompts him to, it casts the die, whether he shall be happy or miserable for ever after. An unwholesome draught, or an unwholesome morsel, may make a man a pining, languishing person all his days. And it is the treachery of his appetite which inveigles him into the mischief, which cheats, and abuses, and by deceitful overtures trepans him into a perpetual calamity.

3. And lastly, the other great thing which a man entrusts his

heart with, is the eternal concernment of his soul hereafter. For as a man's heart guides him, so he lives; and as he has lived in this world, so he must be rewarded in the other: and the state a man passes into there, is eternal and unchangeable; there is neither retreat from misery, nor fall from happiness. And if so, how vast an acquisition is future glory, and how invaluable a loss goes along with damnation! Better is it, that a man had never been born, than that he should miscarry in that his grand and last concern. But it is the behaviour of his heart which must decide whether he shall or no; for if his heart deceives and seduces him into the fatal ways of sin, upon promise of pleasure, it is a thousand to one but the man holds on his course with his life, till those present pleasures determine in everlasting pains. How many are now in hell who have nothing to charge their coming into that woful place upon but a hard heart, a voluptuous heart, a vain, seducing, and deluding heart, which failed them in all the specious shows and promises it made them, which varnished over the ways of sin and death, which spread the paths of destruction with roses, and made them venture an immortal soul upon an appearance, and build eternity upon a fallacy. This has been that which has kindled the unquenchable flames about their ears, which has tied those mill-stones, those loads of wrath about their necks, which have sunk them into endless destruction.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence," says the wise man. Why? Because, says he, "out of it are the issues of life," Prov. iv. 23. It is that in which a man's life is bound up. It is the portal of heaven and hell, and a man passes to either of them through his own breast. For what think we of murders, adulteries, thefts, blasphemies, and the like? Are not these the sins which have filled the mansions of the damned, and slain so many millions of souls? and whence come they, but from the heart? Matt. xv. 19. This is the *puteus inexhaustus*, here are the provisions made for the place of torment, here is laid in the fuel for the "everlasting burnings;" one bottomless pit emptying and discharging itself into the other.

And thus I have shown these things, which a man entrusts his heart with, namely, the honour of God, his happiness in this world, the peace of his conscience, and his eternal happiness hereafter: things, one would think, too great to be trusted with any one, since in all trust there is something of venture, and these things are of too high a value to be ventured any where, but where it is impossible a man should be deceived. God only, who made the soul, is fit to be trusted with it. For if a man is deceived here, where shall he have reparation? Or what can a man gain, when he has once lost himself?

But however, if we should trust these great things in such hands as were liable to a possibility of failing, yet surely we should secure the next degree, that at least there might be no

probability of it; and that we would repose our confidence in one who was infinitely unlikely to deceive or put a trick upon us, so that our confidence might be prudent at least, though not certain and infallible. But now we shall find the heart far from being such a thing; but on the contrary, so unfit to be trusted, that it is ten thousand to one but it betrays its trust: so that as the folly of such a trust has been seen in the first ingredient, namely, the high and inestimable worth of the thing committed to a trust; so the same will appear yet more abundantly from the next, which is the *undue qualifications of the party who is trusted;* and the heart of man will be found to have eminently these two ill qualities utterly unfitted for any trust: 1. That it is weak, and so cannot make good a trust. 2. That it is deceitful, and so will not.

1. As for its weakness, this is twofold: (1.) In point of apprehension, it cannot perceive and understand certainly, what is good. (2.) In point of election, it cannot choose and embrace it.

(1.) And first for the weakness of the heart in respect of its inability to apprehend and judge what is good. This it is deplorably defective in. For though it must be confessed, that there are these common notions concerning good and evil writ in the hearts of men by the finger of God and nature; yet these are blurred and much eclipsed by the fall of man from his original integrity; and if they were not impaired that way, yet they arrived not to their full natural perfection, but as they are improved and heightened by virtuous practices. Upon which account the apostle ascribes not a discerning of good and evil to every one having the natural sense of it, but to such only as "have their senses exercised," Heb. v. 14. Every man has an innate principle of reason, but it is use and cultivation of reason that must enable it actually to do that which nature gives it only a remote power of doing.

This being so, it is further evident, that all men may, and do, neglect to improve those notions naturally implanted in them; whereupon they can with no more certainty trust to their direction, than they can rely upon an illiterate ploughman to be instructed by him in philosophy. The light within is darkness in many, and but as the dusk and twilight in all; and consequently its directions are but imperfect and insufficient, and dangerous to be relied upon.

(2.) The heart of man labours under as great weakness in point of election: it cannot choose what the judgment has rightly pitched upon. For supposing that the understanding has done its part, and given the heart a faithful information of its duty; yet how unable is the heart, after all, actually to engage in the thing so clearly laid before it! It may indeed see the beauty, the lustre, and the excellency of an action, but still it is so much a slave to base inferior desires, that it cannot practise in any pro-

portion to what it approves. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor:* that excellent description of a good judgment enslaved to a vile appetite, is an exact account of the movings of man's heart in most of its choices.

It cannot look its fawning affections in the face, and deny them any thing: but like a man captivated with the sottish love of a woman, he is ready to sacrifice his reason, his interest, and all that he is worth, to her imperious will. When the affections come clamouring about the heart, that presently yields, and is not able to stand out against their assaults, to frown upon their demands, and behave itself boldly and severely in the behalf of virtue and reason. Most men in the world who perish eternally, perish for prevaricating with themselves, and not living up to the judgment and resolves of their own knowledge; they miss of their way to heaven, not because they do not know it, but because they know it, and will not choose it. The heart is "as unstable as water," and therefore "it cannot excel." It hardly bears up against its corruption so far, as to dare to purpose what is good; but if it does, inconstancy quickly melts down its strongest purposes, and the next temptation scatters its best resolutions, as the sun chases away the morning clouds, and drinks up the early dew.

It is the just shame and blush of the frailty of our condition to consider, how hardly we come to fix upon good, and then how quickly we are unfixed; how weak we are to intend, and how much weaker to perform. Impotence and change, like a spiritual palsy, have so seized all the faculties of our souls, that when we reach forth our hand to duty, and endeavour to apply the rule to practice, it trembles and shakes, and is utterly at a loss how to do any thing steadily and exactly, and reach the nice measures of Christian morality. The rule serves only to upbraid the action, which always comes short of it. "Since thou doest these things," says God, Ezek. xvi. 30, "how weak is thy heart!" how unable to resist a flattering mischief and a tempting destruction! It resigns up itself upon every summons of great desire. It quits its throne, lays aside its sceptre, forgets his sovereignty, takes the bit into its mouth, and is willing to be rid.

And thus much for the first ill quality unfitting the heart of man to be trusted, namely, its weakness, and that both in apprehension, that it cannot understand, and also in election, that it cannot choose and embrace what is good.

2. The other ill quality rendering the heart unfit to be trusted, is its deceitfulness, which does so abound in the breasts of all men, that it would pose the acutest head to draw forth and discover what is lodged in the heart. For who can tell all the windings and turnings, all the depths, the hollownesses, and dark corners of the mind of man! He who enters upon this scrutiny, enters into a labyrinth or a wilderness, where he has no guide but chance or industry to direct his inquiries, or to put

an end to his search. It is a wilderness, in which a man may wander more than forty years; a wilderness, through which few have passed into the promised land. If we should endeavour to recount all the cheats and fallacies of it, no arithmetic can number or logic resolve them, their multitude is so vast and their contexture so intricate.

Yet to discover and give us some acquaintance at least with the treachery and unfaithfulness of our hearts, I shall endeavour to lay open and set before you some of those tricks and delusions, which may convince us how unlikely the heart is to make good any trust which we can repose in it, in relation to our spiritual affairs. And these delusions shall be reduced to these three sorts.

1st. Such as relate to the commission of sin.

2dly. Such as relate to the performance of duty.

3dly. Such as relate to a man's conversion or change of his spiritual estate.

1st. And first for those which relate to a man's committing of sin; of this sort there are three.

(1.) First of all a man's heart will drill him on to sin, by persuading him that it is in his power to give bounds to himself, as to the measure of his engaging in that sin, according as he shall think fit. If his conscience is affrighted, when a great and a foul sin shall offer itself to his consideration, his heart will tell him, though the commission of it be indeed dangerous, yet he may at least indulge himself in the thought of it, act it upon the scene of his fancy, and so reap the fantastic pleasure of it in conceit and imagination. And if it comes to be listened to in this its first crafty, and seemingly modest proposal, it will advance a little further, and tell him that he may also please himself with the desires of it; and so by letting his desires work, his corruption grows at length so inflamed, that the man is troublesome and uneasy to himself, till it breaks out into actual commission: and when he is wrought up to such an eagerness and impatience, his heart will then enlarge his commission, and tell him that it is no great matter if he ventures to commit the sin he so much desires for once, since it is in his power to retreat and give over when he pleases, and so is in no danger of being forced to continue in it, which alone proves damnable. But now being brought thus far, sin has a greater interest in his desires than before, and easily persuades the man to act it yet once more, and then again and again, till he is insensibly brought under the power of his sin, and held captive in a sinful course; from which he is not able, by all the poor remainders of his own reason, to redeem and disentangle himself; he has brought himself into the snare which holds and commands him. So that if the free preventing grace of God (which yet no man can certainly promise to himself in such a condition) does not interpose, and

knock off his bolts and shackles, the man must die a prisoner and a slave to his sin, which will provide him but a sad entertainment in the other world.

And now when a man is thus disposed of into his eternal state, with what sadness must he needs reflect upon the cursed artifices of his deluding heart? He little imagined that his destruction could have entered upon him through the narrow passage of sinful thoughts and desires. But had he considered the spreading, insinuating, and encroaching nature of sin, how that by every step it makes into the soul it gets a new degree of possession, and thereby a proportionable power; had he considered also how few men are destroyed at once, but by gradual underminings, and that the greatest mischiefs find it necessary to use art and fallacy to make their approach indiscernible by the smallness of their beginnings; I say, had he considered all these things by an early caution (which his false heart would be sure never to prompt him to), he might have prevented his fatal doom, and avoided the blow by suspecting the hand that designed it.

(2.) The heart of man will betray him into sin, by drawing him into the occasions of it. Certain it is, that every thing may be the occasion of a sin to man, if it be abused; but some things have a more direct and natural connexion with sin than others, so that a man is under a greater danger of being surprised when he falls under such circumstances, than under others. For surely some companies and some ways of living are such, that upon the frailty of corrupt nature a man may as well expect to come dry out of a river, as to come clear and unpolluted out of them. Let a man accustom himself to converse with the intemperate, and profane, and the lascivious, and something of the venom and contagion of these sins will rub itself upon him, do what he can. The very breath of infected and polluted persons is itself infectious.

But there is one notable way above the rest, by which the hearts of most men supplant them; and that is, in drawing them on to something unlawful, by causing them to take their utmost scope and liberty in things lawful. The difference between lawful and unlawful is often very nice, and it is hard to cut the hair in assigning the precise limits of each of them.

But surely it cannot be safe for any man still to walk upon a precipice, to stand upon an indivisible point, and to be always upon the very border of destruction. It is true indeed, that he who stands upon the very brink of the sea, stands as really upon the land, as he who is many miles off; but yet he is not like to stand there so long as the other. There are many companies, sports, and recreations (I shall not mention particulars) no doubt in themselves very lawful; but yet they may chance to prove the bane of the bold user of them. For alas! the heart is un-

able to bear them without warping. Sin is not in the house, but it lies at the door; and it is hard for so near a neighbourhood not to occasion a visit. There are some diversions now-a-days much in request to gratify the palate, the eating of which it is possible a man may time and regulate so that they shall do him no hurt, but it is certain that they can never do him any good. Though in the diet of the soul I am afraid the observation is much stricter, and that it is hard to assign any thing, which should only not do us good, without also doing us some hurt.

And therefore let no man trust his glozing heart, when it tells him what hurt is there in such and such pleasures, such and such recreations? For this very discourse of his heart is a shrewd sign, that they are like to prove hurtful and pernicious to him. And I shall venture to state and lay down this for a rule; that be an action or recreation ever so lawful in itself, yet if a man engages in it merely upon a design of pleasure (as I believe most do), it is ten to one but it becomes a snare to that person, and that he comes off from it with a wound upon his conscience, whether he is always sensible of it or no. Let a man's heart say what it will, I am sure the Spirit of God in these cases recommends to every pious person, caution, diffidence, and suspicion. It bids him secure himself by keeping out of harm's way. He that escapes a danger is fortunate, but he that comes not into it is wise.

(3.) The heart of man will betray him into sin, by lessening and extenuating it in his esteem: than which fallacious way of dealing, there is nothing more usual to the corruption of man's nature. In the judgment of which, great sins shall pass for little sins, and little sins for no sins at all. For moats may enter where beams cannot; and small offences find admittance, where great and clamorous crimes fright the soul to a standing upon its guard, to prevent the invasion.

Now the heart, if it does not find sins small, has this notable faculty, that it can make them so: for it has many arts to take off from, and to diminish the guilt of them: as either by calling them infirmities, such as creep upon men by daily and unavoidable surprise, and such as human weakness cannot possibly protect itself against. When the truth is, the heart is willing to excuse itself from performing duty, and from resisting sin, by representing difficulties for impossibilities, and accounting many things difficult, because it never so much as went about them; whereas a vigorous endeavour would remove not only the supposed impossibility, but even the difficulty also of many actions and duties, which mere laziness has represented to the mind as impracticable.

Certain it is, that the blow given by original sin to man's nature has left a great weakness upon it, much disabling it as to the prosecution of what is good; but yet many impotencies,

or rather averseness to good, are charged upon a natural account, which indeed are the effects only of habitual sins, sins that by frequent practice have got such firm hold of the will, that it can very hardly advance itself into any action of duty. Some have accustomed themselves to swear so often, that they cannot forbear it upon every light occasion. Some have lived intemperately so long, that they cannot refrain from their whore and their cups; and then if either their conscience checks them, or others reprove them, presently their answer is, God forgive them, it is their infirmity, they cannot help it.

But in this they are wretchedly deceived; for it is not infirmity, but custom, custom taken up, and continued by great presumption and audaciousness in sin, inducing them to trample upon a clear command, for the gratifying of a lust or a base desire.

Temptation also is another topic, from which the heart will draw a plausible argument for the extenuation of sin. Men will confess that they sin, but how can they forbear (say they) when the devil pushes them on headlong into the commission of what is evil? And the devil being so much stronger than they, how can such weak creatures resist so mighty an adversary? But in this also the heart plays the sophister, and shows itself like the devil, while it pleads against him; for God himself assures us, that the devil may be resisted, and that so far as to be put to flight: and besides this, the freedom of man's will is a castle that he cannot storm, a fort that he cannot take. If indeed it will surrender itself upon vain and treacherous proposals, its destruction is from itself, and it is deceived, but not forced into sin.

Now so long as a man's heart can possess him with an opinion of the smallness of any sin, it will certainly have these two most pernicious effects upon him.

(i.) Antecedently, he will very easily be induced to commit it; nor will he think the eternal happiness of his soul concerned to watch against it; for he cannot imagine but that it will be as soon pardoned as committed, or that it can make any great breach between God and him. His conscience he finds not much startled or alarmed at it, and so he concludes that it must needs be fair weather without doors, because he finds it so within.

(ii.) The other malignant effect it will have upon a man consequently to sin, is, that he will scarce repent of it, scarce think it worthy of a tear. By which means he is actually under the wrath of God, which abides upon every man during his impenitence. The consequence of which, to him who has a spiritual sense of things, must needs be very dreadful. For every sin unrepented of, may provoke God by withdrawing his grace to lay the sinner open to the commission of grosser; which how far they may waste his conscience, and where they may end, he knows not, but has cause at the thought of it to tremble.

It is incredible to think what ground sin gets of the soul, by the heart's extenuating and undervaluing of it, and that in the very least and most inconsiderable instance. For by this means it is easily let into the soul; and seldom thrown out. No caution is applied beforehand, nor repentance after. And surely, it cannot but be dangerous to leave the world with any one sin unrepented of.

And thus much for that first sort of fallacies which the heart of man is apt to put upon him, namely, such as relate to the commission of sin.

2dly. The second sort is of those that relate to the performance of duty; of which kind are these two.

(1.) A man's heart will persuade him that he has performed a duty, when perhaps it is only some circumstance of it that has been performed by him. Prayer is one of the prime and most sovereign duties of a Christian; and many there are, whose consciences will by no means suffer them to omit it. But how few are there who perform it spiritually, and according to the exact measures of Christian piety! For some do it to be seen of men, and to approve themselves to the eye of the world, that they are not altogether heathens, and destitute of all sense of religion. Some use to pray, as the Athenian orators made harangues before the people, for applause and ostentation of parts, styling a readiness of speech, and a great flow of words, the inspiration of the Spirit.

The corrupt heart of man naturally rests in the *opus operatum* of every duty: and the conscience, having lost much of its first tenderness and sagacity, is willing to take up with the outside superficies of things; to feed upon husks, and to be contented with the mere show and pageantry of duty. There is no doubt but the Pharisee, who made that boasting prayer, or rather bravado before God, Luke xviii. 14, went home abundantly satisfied in himself, though not at all justified before the Seer of hearts. And it is as little to be doubted, but that the rest of his brethren, who did their alms in the concourse of the multitude, and proclaimed their charity with trumpets, were full of an opinion of their own piety; though all that they gave was but a sacrifice to their own pride, and a slavish service to the designs and humours of an insatiable ambition; yet still their flattering hearts echoed back to them all those acclamations of the ignorant, deceived rabble, and questionless told them, that they were the most pious, liberal, and generous persons in the world.

The like instances may be given in the fastings and mortifications used by many people; which, no question, rightly managed, are huge helps to piety, great weakeners of sin, and furtherance to a man in his Christian course. But every man who is driven from his meat by a proclamation, does not therefore keep a fast in the sight of God, whatsoever his foolish heart may persuade

him. Every man who wears sackcloth, and uses himself coarsely, does not therefore perform any one true act of mortification upon his sin. The man catches at the shadow, but misses of the substance of the duty: his heart misreckons him; and therefore, when he comes to rectify his account by the measure God takes in things, he finds that in all his fastings and corporal austerities, he has done indeed a great deal of work, but little duty.

2dly. A man's heart will make him presume to sin with greater confidence, upon the account of duty performed. I have heard of some, who after they had discharged their consciences in confession, used to rush with so much quicker an appetite into sin; as if former scores being cleared, they were now let loose to sin upon a fresh account: and experience shows, that many take heart to sin, after they have performed some strict duty, thinking that that has set them so much beforehand with heaven, that they may well be borne with, if they make some little excursions in the indulgence of their sinful and voluptuous appetites. If they have been for any time in the school of virtue, tied up under its severe disciplines, they think they may well claim some time for play, and then vice shall be their recreation.

This is the corrupt, perverse reasoning of most hearts; this they insist upon as a satisfactory argument to themselves, though infinitely sottish and contradictory to the very nature and design of religion. For as the apostle most justly and rationally upbraids the Galatians in that significant reproof of them, Gal. iii. 3, "What! having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Can piety fit a man for that which crosses and destroys piety? Can any man make this an argument why he should be vicious, because he has been virtuous? or loose and voluptuous, because he has been some time strict and abstemious? Yet this is the brutish discourse of most men's minds; who think it all the reason in the world, that they should relax and unbend, after they have for some time abridged themselves by the severe course of religion.

Though the truth is, upon a right and due estimation of things, such persons never performed any one truly pious and religious action, who had such principles and persuasions habitually resting upon their hearts, but were utterly void of the very notion, much more of the power of godliness. This is evident; for he who performs a duty from a principle of true piety, is so far from being weary of going on in the same course, that he finds his desires thereby quickened, and his strength increased, for a more vigorous prosecution of it; and no man changes his course, and passes into contrary practices, but because he finds in himself a loathing and a dislike of his former: than which there is not a more certain and infallible sign of a false, rotten, hypocritical heart, a heart abhorred and detested by God: for if we loathe God's commands, we may be sure that God as much loathes our perform-

ances, as being the forced effects of compulsion, not the natural, genuine, and free emanations of the will. He, therefore, who thinks the merit of any pious action performed by him may compound for a future licentiousness, abuses himself and his religion; for he makes a liberty to sin the reward of piety, than which there cannot be a greater and a more pestilent delusion. And thus much for the fallacies of the heart relating to the performance of duty.

3dly. The third sort relate to a man's conversion, and the change of his spiritual estate; of which I shall mention two.

(1.) A man's heart will persuade him that he is converted from a state of sin, when perhaps he is only converted from one sin to another; and that he has changed his heart, when he has only changed his vice. This is another of its fallacies, and that none of the least fatal and pernicious. A man has perhaps for a long time taken the full swing of his voluptuous humour, wallowed in all the pleasures of sensuality; but at last, either by age or design, or by some cross accident turning him out of his old way, he comes to alter his course, and to pursue riches as insatiably as formerly he did his pleasures; so that from a sensual epicure he is become a covetous miser; a worthy change and conversion indeed! But as a river cannot be said to be dried up, because it alters its channel, so neither is a man's corruption extinguished, though it ceases to vent itself in one kind of vice, so long as it runs with as full and as impetuous a course in another.

Suppose amongst the Jews a man had passed from the society of riotous and debauched livers; from the company of publicans and sinners, to the strictness and profession of the pharisees; this man indeed might have been termed a new sinner, but not a new creature: he had changed his intemperance or his extortion for the more refined sins of vain-glory and hypocrisy; he had changed a dirty path for one more cleanly, but still for one in the same road. One man perhaps goes to a town or a city through the fields, another through the highway, yet both of them intend and arrive at the same place, and meet and shake hands at the same market. In like manner, a man may pass as surely to hell by a sin of less noise and infamy, as by one more flaming and notorious. And therefore he that changes only from one sin to another, is but the devil's convert; and the whole business of such a conversion, is but a man's altering of the methods of his ruin, and the casting of his damnation into another model.

(2.) A man's heart will persuade him, that a cessation from sin is a plenary conquest and mortification of sin. But a king is a king even while he is asleep, as well as when he is awake, and is possessed of a regal power even then when he does not exercise it. So sin may truly reign where it does not actually rage, and pour itself forth in continual gross eruptions.

There are intervals of operation, vicissitudes of rest and motion, in all finite ages whatsoever; and therefore it is not to be expected but that the sinner may have some relaxation from the drudgery of his sin, and not be put every minute to "obey the flesh in the lusts thereof."

Nay, there may be a very long forbearance; and yet as there may be a truce with an enemy with whom there is no peace; so no man can conclude his corruption vanquished, because for the present it is quiet. For such a quietness there may be upon several accounts: as partly, mere lassitude and weariness; for what epicure can be always plying his palate? what drunkard always pouring in? Nature is not sufficient for the commands of sin without some respite and breathing-time. Partly also may sin be quiet out of design; for sin must still bait its hook with pleasure, and pleasure consists in the interchanges of abstinence with enjoyment, without which it would quickly pass into loathing and satiety. And the devil knows that these interposals of forbearance do but whet the appetite to a greater keenness of desire, when the object shall come again before it.

How miserably then does that man's heart deceive him, when it tells him that his sin lies wholly prostrate and dead, when it only lies still, and stirs not for some time? But alas! it is "not dead, but sleepeth;" for when the soul is hereby made so confident as to quit its guard, sin will quickly step forth and take advantage to act a sorer and sharper mischief upon it than ever.

And thus I have given an account of some of those deceits and fallacies which the heart of man is apt to circumvent him by; and God knows that it is but some of many. For infinite are the impostures that lie couched in the depths and recesses of this hollow and fallacious thing. So that all that I have said is but a paraphrase, and that a very imperfect one, upon that full text of the prophet Jeremy, xvii. 9, that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" It is a depth not to be fathomed, and a mystery never thoroughly to be understood. And being so, I suppose it appears by this time how unavoidable that consequence and deduction is made by Solomon, here in the text, that "whosoever trusts it, is inexcusably a fool." For what principles of ordinary prudence can warrant a man to trust a notorious cheat, and that also such a one as he himself has been cheated and deceived by? There is no man whose experience does not tell him to his face that his heart has deceived him; and no wise man will be deceived so much as twice by the same person.

Now the imputation of being a fool, is a thing which mankind of all others is the most impatient of, it being a blot upon the prime and specific protection of human nature, which is reason; a perfection which both governs and adorns all the rest. For so far as a man is a fool, he is defective in that very faculty which

discriminates him from a brute. Upon which account one would think, that this very charge of folly should make men cautious how they listen to the treacherous proposals coming out of their own bosom, lest they perish with a load of dishonour added to that of their destruction. For if it is imaginable that there can be any misery greater than damnation, it is this, to be damned for being a fool.

But this needs not be our lot, if we can but prevail with ourselves to take that conduct which God has provided us for our passage to our eternal state; a conduct which can neither impose upon us, nor be imposed upon itself, even the holy and eternal Spirit of God, the great legacy which our dying Saviour left to his church, whose glorious office and business it is to lead such as will be lead by him, "into all truth."

To whom therefore, with the Father, and the Son, be ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON X.

THE HOPE OF FUTURE GLORY AN EXCITEMENT TO PURITY OF LIFE.

1 JOHN III. 3.

Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

THE apostle in this chapter endeavours to comfort the saints from a consideration of the transcendent greatness of God's love, which appeared in those excellent privileges that accrued to them from it. The first of which the saints enjoy even in this life, namely, to be the sons of God, the adopted children of the Almighty, to be admitted into the nearest and dearest relation to the great Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The second great privilege is to be enjoyed by the saints in the life to come, and that is no less than a likeness to Christ himself in glory; a participation of those grand, sublime prerogatives that Christ is endowed withal. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him in glory," ver. 2. Now because this great enjoyment was as yet future, and so visible but at a distance, and consequently not so pregnant and bright an argument of comfort, he tells them, that the saints could view it as present in the glass of their hopes, by which they could draw from it a real comfort with an actual fruition.

It is indeed the nature of earthly comforts to afford more delight in their hopes than in their enjoyment. But it is much otherwise in heavenly things, which are of that solid and substantial perfection, as always to satisfy, yet never to satiate; and therefore the delight that springs from the fruition of those is still fresh and verdant; nay, we may add this yet further, that the very expectation of heavenly things, if rational and well-grounded, affords more comfort than the possession and enjoyment of the greatest earthly contents whatsoever.

The apostle having thus told them of their hope, and what a real hold it took of the things hoped for, that he might prevent mistake, and dash presumption, tells them also, that an assured hope of future glory did not at all lead men to present security, but was so far from ministering to sloth, that it did rather quicken and excite them to duty; so that "he that has this hope in him, purifieth himself;" he does not lie still and acquiesce in

this, that he shall be happy and glorious in the world to come, and therefore in the mean time forgets to be virtuous in this; but it raises him to a pursuit of a more than ordinary strain of duty and perfection; "he purifies himself, even as Christ is pure:" this is his hope, this is his design; he expects to be like Christ in the brightness of his glory, and therefore he exerts his utmost diligence to resemble him in the purity of his life too.

Now, before we proceed any further, there are two things that offer themselves in the very entrance of the words, and require some resolution. As first,

1. Is it possible for any man to purify himself? Is it not the Spirit of God that must work in us "both to will and to do?" For are we not naturally dead in trespasses and sins? And who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? How then can so great a work be ascribed to us?

To this I answer, that we must distinguish of a twofold work of purification.

(1.) The first is, the infusing of the habit of purity or holiness into the soul, which is done in regeneration or conversion; and in this respect no man living can be said to purify himself. For in this he is only passive, and merely recipient of that grace, that the Spirit of God, the sole agent, infuses into him; antecedently to which, we are said to be "dead in trespasses and sins," and consequently in this condition can by no means contribute to this work, so as to purify ourselves.

(2.) The other work of purification, is the exercising of that habit or grace of purity which a man received in conversion; by the acting or exercising of which grace he grows actually more pure and holy. And in this respect a man may be said in some sense to purify himself, yet not so as if he were either the sole or the prime agent in this work; for God is the principal agent, who first moves us, and then we act and move, and are said to be coworkers with God; and so are these words to be understood. God, without any help or procurement of our own, first gave us a talent, which afterwards we improve, yet not that entirely by our own strength, but by his assistance. In short, that which has been said in explication of this thing, amounts to no more than that known and true saying, that God who made, and since converted, that is, new-made us, without ourselves, will not yet save us without ourselves. And thus much for the first query.

2. But secondly, admitting that a man may purify himself in the sense mentioned, yet can he do it to that degree as to equal the purity of Christ himself? to "purify himself even as he is pure?" of whom it is expressly said, that "he is fairer," that is, holier and purer, "than the sons of men," and that the Spirit has "anointed him with the oil of gladness," that is, with all divine graces, "above his fellows."

To this also I answer, that this term, "even as," denotes here only a similitude of kind, not an equality of degree; that is, he that hopes for glory, gets his heart purified with the same kind of holiness that is in Christ, though he neither does nor can reach it in the same measure of perfection: he gets the same meekness, the same spiritual-mindedness and love to the divine precepts, that is, the same for kind; forasmuch as there is no perfection in Christ's humanity, but the very same for kind is also to be found in his members, though we confess in a much lower degree; as the same kind of blood that runs in the head, runs also in the hand, and in the foot, though as it is in the head, it is attended and heightened with quicker and finer spirits, than as it is diffused into the inferior members. But yet further, though we should grant that he that has this hope in him pursues not only after the same kind, but also after the same degree of purity that is in Christ, yet it follows not hence that he ever attains to the same; for we must distinguish of holiness as it is absolutely perfect in the pattern, and as it is imperfect in our imitation.

These things being thus cleared off, I cannot perceive any thing more of difficulty in the words; the prosecution of which shall lie in the discussion of these two things.

I. To show what is implied and included in a man's purifying of himself, here spoken of in the text.

II. To show how the hopes of heaven come to have such an influence upon the effecting of this work.

I. And for the first of these: *to purify* is a term of alteration, and imports the removal of the filth or pollution of any thing, by introducing the contrary qualities of purity or cleanness. Now that which a man is to remove, and to purify himself from, is sin, in which there are two things to be carried off by a thorough purification. 1. The power of sin. 2. The guilt of sin.

As for the first, the purifying of ourselves from the *power of sin*, I shall show, (1.) Wherein it consists; (2.) By what means it is to be effected.

It consists of these three things.

1st. A most serious and hearty bewailing of all the past acts of sin, by a continually renewed repentance. Every day, every hour, will afford fresh matter for a penitential sorrow; for sin will still increase and multiply: so that Christ has taught us a daily prayer for the forgiveness of sins; and the very nature of the thing will teach us to mingle prayer with humiliation; since to pray to God to forgive that for which we are not humbled, is but further to provoke him, and to procure a penalty instead of a pardon. We are told that "the righteous man falls seven times a day," and I am sure if he falls by so often sinning, he cannot rise but by as often repenting.

Some are apt to deceive themselves, and to think that once repenting is sufficient for all their sins; so that when this is done, they think themselves beforehand with God for all the sins that they shall commit for the future: but such must know, that repentance is still to follow sin; and he that does not repent continually, never repented so much as once truly. What needed the prophet Jeremy to have wished his head a fountain, in order to his weeping for sin, did not that require such a stream as was to follow without intermission? A fountain of sin may well require a fountain of sorrow. For repentance cannot be effectual, but as it bears some proportion to sin: and unless one be as continual as the other, there is no proportion between them.

It is an excellent thing so to manage our spiritual accounts, as not to let our debts run on too far. That soul that is careful to make scores even between God and itself by a daily repentance, has a mighty advantage over its corruption, and will by degrees weary it out: the very thought of a subsequent humiliation is enough to embitter and discommend the sweetest offers of sin.

Repentance has a purifying power, and every tear is of a cleansing virtue; but these penitential clouds must be still kept dropping, one shower will not suffice; for repentance is not one single action, but a course. We may here compare the soul to a linen cloth, it must be first washed to take off its native hue and colour, and to make it white; and afterwards it must be ever and anon washed, to preserve and to keep it white. In like manner the soul must be cleansed, first from a state of sin by a converting repentance, and so made pure, and afterwards by a daily repentance it must be purged from those actual stains that it contracts, and so be kept pure. It is an enjoyment and a privilege reserved for heaven, not to need repentance; and the reason of this is, because the cause of it will then be taken away. But here this pitch of perfection is not to be hoped for. We cannot expect that God should totally wipe these tears from our eyes, till he has taken all sin out of our hearts. Till it be our power and privilege not to sin, it is still our duty to repent.

2dly. The purifying ourselves from the power of sin consists in a vigilant prevention of the acts of sin for the future. If we would keep our garment clean, it is not sufficient to wash it only, unless we have also a continual care to keep it from drailing in the dirt. After the use of healing physic, by which we are freed from our distemper for the present, we must also use preventing physic, to secure it from the returns of it hereafter. Repentance bewails those sins that a man has committed, and bewares of those which as yet he has not; it has a double aspect, looking upon things past with a weeping eye, and upon the future with a watchful. I know the bare suppressing of sin from breaking out into act is not able to mortify or extinguish the power, yet in this sense, at least, it may be said to weaken it, that

it hinders it from growing stronger. For a restraint of ourselves from the committing of sin, bereaves the power of sin of that strength that it would certainly have acquired by those commissions. Sin indeed while it lies quiet, still is sin, but when it rages in outward actions it is more sinful. While a beast is kept in and shut up he still retains his wild nature; but when he breaks out and gets loose, his wildness is much more hurtful and outrageous.

Now, for the keeping of sin from an actual breaking out, a man should observe what objects and occasions are apt to draw it forth, and accordingly avoid them. When there are some impressions of holiness made upon the heart, if we yet venture it amongst the allurements of enticing objects, those will quickly again deface them. As when we have stamped a piece of wax with the print of a seal, if we put the wax to the fire again, that will presently melt out the impression.

He that would keep the power of sin from running out into act, must restrain it from conversing with the object. For when that has once cast the bait before the heart, so that the heart begins to look upon it, and by degrees to delight in it, and to feed its imagination with pleasure, then let a man beware, for the tempter is then hammering and framing out a sinful action, sin is then conceiving; and if we do not fright it by humiliation, so far as to make it prove abortive, it will certainly bring forth; and we know that when the heart has brought forth sin, sin will be sure to bring forth death.

In vain therefore is any endeavour to purify the heart, unless we watch. A Christian should be always in a posture of caution. If the former part of our life has been stained, let us endeavour to keep that, at least, that is to come, pure and unpolluted. And then, though abstinence from sin cannot of itself take away the power of it, yet it will put the heart in a good preparedness for grace to take it away. On the contrary, every new actual transgression exceedingly heightens our account. For this is most certainly true, that whatsoever adds to the guilt of sin, increases also the power.

3dly. The purifying ourselves from the power of sin, consists in a continual mortifying and weakening the very root and principle of inherent corruption. The power of sin is properly the root, and the actual commission of it are the branches; and our purifying work cannot be perfect, unless as we lop off the branches, so we also strike at the root. There is a principle of sin conveyed to us from our very being, and it continues with us as long as our being, that is, in this state of mortality. And there is no man living but has wrapped up in his nature the seeds of all impurity; so that in this respect we are said to have a body of sin, Rom. vi. 6. Sin is not only a scar, or a sore, cleaving to one part or member, but it has incorporated itself into the whole man.

In respect of which also it is said, "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" Job xxv. 4. A man draws so much filth from his very conception and nativity, that it is now made almost as natural and essential to him to be a sinner as to be a man.

Now the chief work of purification lies in the disabling and mortifying this sinful faculty. The power of godliness must be brought into the room of the power of sin. A man must place all his endeavours for the battering down of this strong hold. A man must be perpetually striving as for his life and for eternity, to get the conquest over his inbred enemy. All ways and courses must be taken to pluck out this core, or the wound cannot be cured. All endeavours to purify ourselves from actual sins, unless we also work out the principle of sin, is only to wash and scour the outside of the vessel, while the inside is full of all kind of filth and noisomeness. As long as this remains in us it will be fighting, and if it be not mortified it will be victorious. It is continual and restless in all its workings, "like the troubled sea, continually casting forth mire and dirt." Every day it casts new defilements upon the soul, fresh pollutions upon the conscience. Justly therefore are we to direct our purifying work against this, forasmuch as this is the cause, and, as it were, the parent of all those actual abominations that swarm in our lives.

Having thus shown the particulars of which this work of purifying ourselves from the power of sin does consist, I come now to

(2.) The next thing, which is, to show the means by which it is to be effected; three I shall mention, as having a most sovereign force and influence for the compassing of this great work.

1st. The first is, with all possible might and speed to oppose the very first rising and movings of the heart to sin; for these are the buds that produce that bitter fruit; and if sin be not nipped in the very bud, it is not imaginable how quickly it will shoot forth. There be sudden sallies out of inherent corruption in these first motions, which, though at first they are not so easily prevented, yet may be easily suppressed; and these may be working in the heart, when there is no noise of any outward enormity in the actions. The fire may burn strongly and vehemently, though it does not flame. The bees may be at work, and very busy within, though we see none of them fly abroad.

Now these sins, though they may seem small in themselves, yet are exceedingly pernicious in their effects. These little foxes destroy the grapes as much or more than the greater, and therefore are to be diligently sought out, hunted, and killed by us, if we would keep our hearts fruitful. We should deal with these first streamings out of sin, as the psalmist would have the people of God deal with the brats of Babylon; "happy shall he be, who taketh and dasheth those little ones against the stones." And without doubt most happy and successful will that man

prove in his spiritual warfare, who puts on no bowels of pity even to his infant corruptions, but slays the small as well as the great; and so not only conquers his enemies by opposing their present force, but also by extinguishing their future race. The smallest children, if they live, will be grown men: and the first motions of sin, if they are let alone, will spread into great, open, and audacious presumptions.

But if a man is always upon his guard, and, as it were, stands perdue at his heart, to spy when sin begins to peep out in these first inclinations, and then with much force and courage beats them back again; the very power of sin will by degrees languish: for as frequent working improves the power, so a long disuse and intermission of working will insensibly weaken it. The first motions of sin lie nearest to the faculty itself; whereupon he who vigorously fights against these, must by consequence also wound that; as he that strikes that part that is next to the root, by the same blow weakens also the root itself.

As often therefore as a man finds his corruption renewing its assaults, let him set upon it with a renewed opposition. As often as that stirs, let him strike, at no hand suffering it to get ground of him; for every motion of it not resisted gives it an advance. And we know that after it has made some progress, it is then harder to be subdued than at the first repulsed. When an enemy is but rising, it is easy to knock him to the ground again; but when he is up, and stands upon his legs, he is not then so easily thrown down. It is less difficult to hinder and prevent, than to stop and restrain the course of sin.

2dly. A second way to purify ourselves from the power of sin, is to be frequent in severe mortifying duties, such as watchings and fastings, the use of which directly tends to weaken the very vitals of our corruption. For they are most properly contrary to the flesh; and whatsoever opposes that, proportionably weakens sin. Yet still I recommend not these practices as if they were any ways meritorious, or of themselves able to subdue sin, but only as spiritual instruments which God sanctifies, and the Spirit often employs and makes successful about this great work. And so far as under God they are instrumental and conducing to the taming of the flesh, they have been of singular use to the saints of God in all ages: and those who are not in some measure acquainted with the exercise of such austerities, it is to be feared are but novices in piety, and strangers to the arts of mortification. He that would lay the axe to the root of his sin, must use it coarsely, and strike it boldly. Courtship to an enemy is but cruelty to ourselves. Better were it for a man to restrain an unruly appetite, and to stint himself in the measures of his very food and his sleep, than by a full indulgence of himself in these, to pamper up his corruption, and give it strength and activity to cast off all bonds, till at length it becomes unconquerable. Sin

has now so insinuated itself into our nature, that we cannot freely cherish that, but we must by unhappy consequence nourish and feed our sin too. For which cause it is that such as have had experience what it is to walk with God, and what are the chief impediments to such a course, have been always fearful of pleasing the flesh, though in things lawful or indifferent. And every man's conscience can best resolve him, whether or no full allowance of himself even in things not forbid, has not indisposed him to a more near and spiritual converse with God. He that would maintain such a strict communion with himself, must bind that excellent advice of the apostle upon his heart, Gal. v. 13, "not to use liberty for an occasion to the flesh." For did but men well consider how apt the flesh is to encroach upon the spirit, and how ready to turn every thing into an occasion of sin, they would keep it under with the severest discipline, and deny it in all its importunate cravings, as knowing that they have to deal with a rebel who is rather bound up and restrained, than thoroughly subdued and conquered; and therefore, when he has opportunity, wants not will to renew his rebellion. It is not in vain therefore that the apostle, Rom. xiii. 14, warns men "not to make provision for the flesh." For God knows that is too apt to provide for itself, and to prog and purvey for the satisfaction of its vile desires.

There are two things in the body, both of which contend to have its service, and the interest of both is totally different, namely, sin and the soul. And if we would break the dominion that sin usurps over it, and make it subservient to the operations of the soul, and the spiritual commands of the understanding, we must be sure to rule and feed it like a sturdy slave, inure and accustom it to flesh-displeasing performances. And a constant faithful practice of this will at length enfeeble the forces of sin, and keep them from making an insurrection against the spirit. Our bodies are unhappily made the weapons of sin; and therefore if we would overcome that, we must by an austere course of duty first wring these weapons out of his hands.

3dly. A third way to purify ourselves from the power of sin, is to be frequent and fervent in prayer to God for fresh supplies of sanctifying grace. There is no conquest to be had over sin but by grace, nor is grace any way so effectually to be procured as by prayer. For surely if we would obtain any thing from a prince, it must be by way of petition.

We find a defiling power of sin within us; and perhaps we strive against it, but still it is strong; we contend with it, but still it prevails. And now what should we do, but call in help and assistance from above? "Come unto me," says Christ, "all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you ease." Christ calls upon us to come, and I am sure the best way is to come upon our knees; we cannot make our addresses to him more acceptably than by humble, frequent, and importunate supplications.

It is a truth both clear from scripture, and ratified by the experience of all believers, that there was never any one, were his entanglements in sin never so great, his corruptions never so raging, but if he was enabled to wait upon mercy in an earnest constant use of prayer for the removal of his sin, became in the end a conqueror, the issue was glorious, and the success comfortable. Prayer is the only expedient that we have always in readiness to procure help in the time of spiritual distress. To describe the virtue, efficacy, and excellency of this duty, is not the business of the present discourse; but thus much I shall say of it, that it is that which enables every believer like a prince to prevail with God. It has (as I may speak with reverence) a kind of omnipotence; for it even overpowers him that is almighty. It is this that has often tied God's hands from the inflicting of judgments, and opened them for the bestowing of blessings.

And now if this be the force and energy of prayer, when we find the power of sin to grow violent, and the workings of it by any strength of our own irresistible, why do we not fly to this remedy, and cry mightily to God, that he would "create clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us?" Why do we not make that request to our Saviour that the leper did? "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." It is but one word of his power dispensing out purifying grace, and we shall be pure. And surely Christ could not but vouchsafe a gracious answer to every such petition. For if he was of such tenderness and compassion as to heal the leprosy and distemper of the body upon asking, do we not think that he will be much readier to commiserate and heal the dangerous, loathsome leprosy of the soul, which is sin, upon the vehement entreaties of a sincere heart? Certainly he that was so tender to the bodies of men, must needs be much more compassionate to their souls.

Now we are to observe yet further, that as prayer is of such sovereign force to procure sanctifying grace from God, so there is a certain cleansing, purifying power in the very duty itself. And we may appeal to the experience of any pious person, who has accustomed himself to be earnest and spiritual in prayer, whether he has not found his heart in a very different frame and posture after the performance of it, from what it used to be at other times. How have his inclinations to sin been, as it were, stupified, the dislike of his corruption renewed! How has his love to holiness been inflamed! How much stronger has he found himself to encounter a temptation! I believe there is none who ever kneeled down to this duty with a good heart, and performed it well, but rose up with a better. If he came to it with desires against his sin, he went away with strength added to his desires.

Whoever therefore would give a speedy despatch to his corruption, let him continually engage his prayers against the power of

it. It is reported of Alexander, that when he was beset round by his enemies, and sorely wounded, he yet bore up his spirit and fought upon his knees. So a Christian, when all the powers of darkness do encompass him, and his sin has given him many wounds, yet if he can but hold out praying and fighting against it upon his knees, he may in the end vanquish and overcome it. A praying heart naturally turns into a purified heart.

And thus much for the first thing from which we are to purify ourselves, namely, the power of sin, as also for the ways and means by which it is to be effected. From all which we gather, how vain and unsuccessful that method of purifying the heart from sin must needs prove, which is used by two sorts of men.

(1.) Such as direct their humiliations and penitential cleansings only to some great actual sin, that has broken out in their lives, but in the mean time never to the power and root of sin, which is the cause of all these actual rebellions. These indeed are most conspicuous in our lives, but the other is the most dangerous and hurtful to our souls. For this is that spring-head, that lies under ground, and sends forth all those streams of impurity that flow in our actions. Now that should most humble us, that most provokes God; but it is the sinful frame of the heart, the inclination and disposition of the whole man to wickedness, that renders us so loathsome in the pure eyes of God. We indeed take more notice of a sinful action than of a sinful heart, because that does more vex and disquiet us, and is more visible to ourselves and others. But when repentance is sincere and effectual, where it resolves to kill sin, it gives the first stab to the heart. Thus David, an excellent pattern of true penitence, when he would humble himself for those actual sins of murder and adultery, he pursues them to their first cause, which was his sinful nature, Psalm li. 5: "In sin," says he, "was I conceived." And ver. 10, he cries out for "a clean heart." Those actual sins he made only occasions to discover to him the sin of his nature. They indeed made a greater noise and clamour in the world, and procured him more trouble and shame from men; but he knew that the power of sin in his heart was most odious, and consequently most deserved his sorrow.

From whence we may take an excellent infallible note of difference between a forced, unsincere, and a true, spiritual repentance; that the first humbles us chiefly for actual sins, and that because they are the most troublesome; the latter humbles us chiefly for the sin of our hearts and natures, and that because it is the most sinful. For that it is so, is clear from this consideration; because the sin of our natures makes our state and condition sinful, which a bare actual transgression does not. No wonder therefore, if many poor deluded persons, who spend much time and labour to purify themselves from sin, yet after all are not purified. For they fasten their repentance upon some one

actual sin, but overlook the power. But certainly this is to take the wrong way, and to labour in the fire; this is to plaster a pimple upon the cheek or face, while a malignant humour is to be purged out of the whole body. For still it is the body of sin, and not so much this or that particular sin, that is like to be the sinner's destruction. It is not a sore or a bruise upon his hand or arm, though perhaps that may pain him most, but it is his consumption, though it does not so much pain him, that endangers his life. Whosoever therefore would be throughly purified, must begin the work here, strike at the foundation, stop the fountain, block up that place from whence sin receives all its supplies; otherwise all labour, all sorrow and humiliation will avail nothing. For after it has beaten back sin from one place, it will break out in another; when one actual sin disappears in a man's life, another will presently start forth. The only sure and infallible way of destroying the effect, is first to remove the cause.

(2.) The other ineffectual course to purify the heart from sin is, when men rest only in complaints of the evil of their natures, without a vigorous endeavour to amend the particular enormities and misdemeanors of their actions. This course is directly contrary to the former, which pursues the reformation of particular actions, without regarding the purification of the heart. Both ways are equally unsuccessful. For to purge the actions before the heart, is preposterous; and to complain of the heart without reforming of the actions, is vain and superfluous. Many complain and cry out very tragically of the wretchedness of their hearts, their total indisposition to all good, and exceeding propensity to all sin. All which may be very true: but while they are complaining of their hearts, perhaps they freely allow themselves in some known course of disobedience; they frequently renew wounds upon their consciences by the repeated commission of actual sin: and this surely is not the way ever to get themselves purified; thus to complain of sin, and to commit sin; to confute their complaints by their practices; to cry out of the body of sin, and yet to take no notice of actual impieties; that is both a provocation to God, and an abuse to themselves. Their business is to turn complaint into endeavour, words into actions, and vigorously to oppose every particular temptation, to stifle every sinful suggestion: for certainly none ever truly hated the sinfulness of his heart, who did not in some measure reform the sinfulness of his actions.

2. I proceed now to the other thing from which we are to purify ourselves, and that is, the guilt of sin. In speaking of which I shall show, (1.) Negatively, what cannot purify us from the guilt of sin. (2.) Positively, what alone can.

(1.) For the first of these. No duty or work within the power and performance of man, as such, is able to expiate and take away the guilt of sin. In this matter we must put our

hands upon our mouths, and be silent for ever. He that thinks and attempts by his own goodness to satisfy God's justice, does by this the more incense it: and by endeavouring to remove his guilt, does indeed increase it. His works of satisfaction for sin are the greatest sins, and stand most in need of the satisfaction of Christ.

We know how miserably the deluded papists err in this point, how they wander in the maze of their own inventions about works of penance, deeds of charity, pilgrimages, and many other such vain ways, found out by them to purge and purify guilty consciences. A man perhaps has committed some gross sin, the guilt of which lies hard and heavy upon his conscience; and how shall he remove it? Why, peradventure, by a blind devotion, he says over so many prayers, goes so many miles barefoot, gives so much to holy uses, and now he is *rectus in curiâ*, free and absolved in the court of heaven. But certainly the folly of those that practise these things is to be pitied; and the blasphemy of those that teach them to be detested. For do they know and consider what sin is, and whom it strikes at? Is it not the breach of the law? Is it not against the infinite justice and sovereignty of the great God? And can the poor, imperfect, finite services of a sinful creature ever make up such a breach? Can our pitiful broken mite discharge the debt of ten thousand talents? Those that can imagine the removal of the guilt of the least sin feasible, by the choicest and most religious of their own works, never as yet knew God truly, nor themselves, nor their sins; they never understood the fiery strictness of the law, nor the spirituality of the gospel.

Now though this error is most gross and notorious amongst the papists, yet there is something of the same spirit that leavens and infects the duties of most professors; who in all their works of repentance, sorrow, and humiliation for sin, are too, too apt secretly to think in their hearts, that they make God some amends for their sins. And the reason of this is, because it is natural to all men to be self-justiciaries, and to place a justifying power in themselves, and to conceive a more than ordinary value and excellency in their own works, but especially such as are religious.

But this conception is of all others the most dangerous to the soul, and dishonourable to God, as being absolutely and diametrically opposite to the tenor of the gospel, and that which evacuates the death and satisfaction of Christ; for it causes us, while we acknowledge a Christ, tacitly to deny the Saviour. And herein is the art and policy of the devil seen, who will keep back the sinner as long as he can from the duties of repentance and humiliation, and when he can do this no longer, he will endeavour to make him trust and confide in them. And so he circumvents us by this dilemma: he will either make us neglect

our repentance or adore it; throw away our salvation by omission of duty, or place it in our duties: but let this persuasion still remain fixed upon our spirits, that repentance was enjoined the sinner as a duty, not as a recompence; and that the most that we can do for God, cannot countervail the least that we have done against him.

(2.) In the next place therefore positively, that course which alone is able to purify us from the guilt of sin, is by applying the virtue of the blood of Christ to the soul by renewed acts of faith. We hold, indeed, that justification, as it is the act of God, is perfect and entire at once, and justifies the soul from all sins both past and future; yet justification and pardoning mercy is not actually dealt forth to us after particular sins, till we repair to the death and blood of Christ by particular actings of faith upon it; which actings also of themselves cleanse not away the guilt of sin, but the virtue of Christ's blood conveyed by them to the soul: for it is that alone that is able to wash away this deep stain, and to change the hue of the spiritual Ethiopian; nothing can cleanse the soul but that blood that redeemed the soul.

The invalidity of whatsoever we can do in order to this thing, is sufficiently demonstrated in many places of scripture: Job ix. 30, 31, "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet thou shalt plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me." He that hath nothing to rinse his polluted soul with but his own penitential tears, endeavours only to purify himself in muddy water, which does not purge, but increase the stain. In Christ alone is that fountain that is opened for sin and for uncleanness; and in this only we must wash and bathe our defiled souls, if ever we would have them pure. 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." It is from his crucified side that there must issue both blood to expiate, and water to cleanse our impieties. Faith also is said the purify the heart, Acts xv. 9. But how? Why certainly, as it is instrumental to bring into the soul that purifying virtue that is in Christ. Faith purifies, not as the water itself, but as the conduit that conveys the water. Again, Rev. i. 5, Christ is said to have "washed us from our sins by his own blood." There is no cleansing without this: so that we may use the words of the Jews, and convert an imprecation into a blessing, and pray that "his blood may be upon us" and upon our souls; for it is certain that it will be one way upon us, either to purge or to condemn us. Every soul is polluted with the loathsome, defiling leprosy of sin. And now for the purging off of this leprosy, if the Spirit of God bids us go and wash in the blood of Christ, that spiritual Jordan, and assures us that upon such washing our innocence shall revive and grow anew, and our original lost purity return again upon us, shall we now in a huff of spiritual

pride and self-love run to our own endeavours, our own humiliations, and say, as Naaman did, "Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?" Are not my tears, my groans, and my penitential sorrows, of more efficacy to cleanse me, than the blood and death of Christ? May I not use these and be clean, and purified from sin? I answer no; and after we have tried them, we shall experimentally find their utter insufficiency. We may sooner drown, than cleanse ourselves with our own tears.

I have now finished the first general thing proposed for the handling of the words, which was to show what is implied in the purifying of ourselves, here spoken of in the text; I proceed now to the other,

II. Which is, to show *how the hope of heaven and a future glory comes to have such a sovereign influence upon this work.* It has so upon a double account, natural and moral.

1. And first upon a natural account; this hope purifies, as being a special grace infused into the heart by the Holy Ghost, and in its nature and operation directly contrary to sin: as heat is a quality both in nature and working, contrary to, and destructive of cold. All grace is naturally of a sin-purging virtue; as soon as ever it is infused into the soul, it is not idle, but immediately operative. And its operation is to change and transform the soul into its own nature; for the effecting of which, it must work out that principle of corruption, that does intimately possess it. When leaven is cast into the lump it presently begins to work and to ferment, till by degrees it has thoroughly changed the whole mass. In like manner every grace will be incessantly working, till it has wrought over the heart to its own likeness.

Now hope is one of the principal graces of the Spirit, so that we have it marshalled with faith and charity, and placed immediately after faith in regard of the method of its operation, which is immediately consequent upon that of faith. For what faith looks upon as present in the promise, that hope looks upon as future in the event. Faith properly views the promise, hope eyes the performance. But the scripture tells us, that "faith purifies the heart," and casts out the filth and corruption naturally inherent in it: and if these are the effects of faith, they must needs be ascribed also to hope, which is sown in the heart by the same eternal Spirit; and consequently is of the same quality and operation with that. For that it springs not from mere nature, but from a higher principle, is most manifest. Since it is the Spirit of God alone that proposes to the soul the grounds of hope, and lays before it the object of hope, and then by an immediate almighty power enables the soul fiducially to close with, and rest upon that object upon those grounds. Flesh and blood cannot rise so high; bare reason cannot furnish the heart with

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such a support. It may indeed cause us to presume, but it can never cause us truly to hope.

2. The hope of future glory has an influence upon this work of purifying ourselves upon a moral account; that is, by suggesting to the soul such arguments as have in them a persuasive force to engage it in this work. Of which sort I shall reckon four.

(1.) And the first shall be drawn from the necessary relation that this work has to the attainment of heaven, as the use of the means to the acquisition of the end. Our way to happiness does indispensably lie through holiness; and God has so ordered things that we cannot arrive at one but through the other. Now when the purification of our hearts is the proper way and means appointed and consigned by God's own institution, for our obtaining of everlasting felicity with himself, is it not the highest strain of folly and madness that is imaginable, for a man to pretend that he does earnestly hope for this happiness, and yet in the mean time totally neglects that course by which alone it is attainable? Should we take such a course in worldly things, how cheap, how unreasonable, and ridiculous would our hope appear! For does any one hope to reap, when he never sows, and expect treasure from a far country with which he holds no traffic or commerce? Certainly notwithstanding all words and protestations, we should conclude that such persons did not really hope for the things they pretended: or if they did hope for them, that they were incurably mad and besotted, and past all hope, at least as to the recovery of their reason. The apostle most rationally warns men in Gal. vi. 7, 8, not to think that they can mock God because they can deceive themselves. "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." For as it is absurd to hope to reap, and yet not to sow, so it is equally unreasonable to sow one kind of grain, and to expect a crop of another; to sow tares, and yet hope to reap wheat. There is no "reaping of life everlasting" (as the apostle's phrase is) but by "sowing to the Spirit;" this is the only proper way to attain it. For this is an eternal truth, that the works of the Spirit have a necessary subordination to the rewards of the Spirit.

(2.) The second argument by which the hope of future glory persuades the soul to purify itself, shall be taken from this consideration, that it is purity alone that can fit and qualify the soul for so holy a place. He that is clothed in filth and rags is not a fit person to converse and live in a court; nor is there any one who designs the course of his life in such a place, but will adorn and dress himself accordingly. David proposes and resolves the question in Psalm xxiv. 3, 4, "Who shall ascend into thy holy hill? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart." And again in Psalm xciii. 5, "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord,

for ever." And therefore, as God said to Moses, "Pull off thy shoes, for the place on which thou standest is holy ground;" so may we say to every one that hopes for heaven, Take away that filth, that enormity and corruption that cleaves to thy life, for the place whither thou art going is holy; and therefore requires and admits of none but holy inhabitants. In Rev. xxi. 27, it is said, that "nothing shall enter into the new Jerusalem that is polluted, or that maketh a lie." It is with the new Jerusalem as it was heretofore with the old, where all the filth, the offscourings, and whatsoever was noisome in the city, was carried to a place without, and there burnt. And we all know, that there is a deep and dismal place without the new Jerusalem, where every noisome, wicked, and polluted thing shall be cast and burnt with everlasting flames.

Nay further, purity and holiness does not only fit us for heaven, so that without it we can have no entrance or admittance there; but it also so fits us, that if it were possible for us to enter into heaven void of it, heaven would be no place of happiness to us in that condition, but a place of trouble, torment, and vexation. As for instance, it is impossible for a beggar in his rags to be admitted to the society and converse of princes and noblemen: but put the case that he were, yet his beggarly condition would never suffer him to enjoy himself in that company, in which he could be nothing but a mock and a derision. In like manner, heaven bears no suitableness to an impure, unsanctified person. For a sinful heart must have sinful delights and sinful company; and where it meets not with such in the very midst of comforts and company, it finds a solitude and a dissatisfaction. The business we shall be put to in heaven, is for ever to praise and admire the great God for the infinite beauty of his holiness, and the glorious perfections of his nature; but this surely is an employment no ways either fit for or desirable to a sinner. It is indeed a blessed thing to see God, but it is so only to the pure in heart: for to the wicked and impure the vision of God himself could not be beatifical. Those that live in any country must conform to the habit of the country: those that are citizens of the new Jerusalem must have the clothing and the garb of such citizens, even the long white robes of a pure, unspotted righteousness. In a word, no hope can give us a title to heaven, but such a one as also gives us a fitness for it.

(3.) The third argument, by which the hope of heaven persuades the soul to purify itself, shall be drawn from the obligation of gratitude. For surely if I expect so great a gift at God's hands as eternal happiness, even humanity and reason cannot but constrain me to pay him at least a temporary, short obedience. For shall I hope to be saved by him whom I strike at and defy? Or can I expect that he should own me in another world, when I reject, despise, and trample upon his commands in this?

God gives us righteous precepts, and endears them to us by glorious promises; and now can it stand with the principles, not of piety only, but of common ingenuity, to balk the duty, and yet to snatch at the reward? to expect the highest favours from God's mercy, and to offer the greatest indignities to his holiness? When Christ had promised paradise to the thief upon the cross, would it not have been a prodigious piece of ingratitude for him to have joined with his fellow-thief in cursing and reviling him, by whose favour he expected presently to exchange his cross for a crown?

God promises to us a kingdom, and makes the condition of our passage to it, only the "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit:" a work that is our privilege as well as our duty; and shall we not obey him in this one command? a command so reasonable for him to enjoin, and so advantageous for us to perform? For shall he be willing to make us glorious, and we grudge to make ourselves pure? Shall he hold forth such vast wages, and we not find in our hearts to set about the work? These things are absurd and disingenuous, and such as the world would cry out of in common converse. And therefore let no man think, that that disposition can commend him to God, that would justly make him abhorred by men.

(4.) And lastly, the fourth argument, by which the hope of heaven persuades the soul to purify itself, shall be taken from this consideration; that purity is the only thing that can evidence to us our right and interest in those glorious things that we profess ourselves to hope for. It is infinitely fond and presumptuous, for a man to hope to inherit that estate to which he can show no title. The reasonableness of our hopes of heaven depends upon the sure right and claim that we have to it; and prove this we cannot in the court of our own conscience, much less in the court of heaven, but only by the obedience and purity of our lives, and their strict conformity to the excellent precepts of the gospel. No man can ascertain himself that he is an heir of glory, unless he can prove himself to be a son; and he shall never be able to find that he is a son, till holiness makes him like his heavenly Father; where there is this relation there will be also some resemblance.

And now I suppose, that from what has been discoursed upon this subject, every one does, or at least may, gather a certain mark or criterion by which to judge of his hopes and pretences as to the happiness of his future estate. It is grace only that ends in glory. And he that hopes for heaven in earnest, will be as active in his repentance as he is serious in his hopes. Who almost is there that does not own himself a candidate and an expectant of future glory, nay, even amongst those whose present glory is only in their shame? But if such persons did not wretchedly prevaricate with themselves, how could there be so much of

heaven in their hopes, and yet so little of it in their conversation? How comes their heart to be in one place, and their treasure in another?

It is evident, that the very hope and religion of every profane and vicious liver is but mockery and pretence. For can one of common sense really expect to be saved in the constant practice of those enormities, for which the God of truth himself assures him he shall be damned? It is infinitely vain for a man to talk of heaven while he trades for hell, or to look upwards while he lives downwards; yet thousands do so, and it is the common practice of the deluded world, which shows how much men trifle in the grand business of their eternal condition. They profess a hope of that of which they have scarce a thought; and expect to enjoy God hereafter, though they live wholly without him here. But the issue will be accordingly; neither they nor their hopes can ever stand before the pure eyes of him, with whom live only "the spirits of just men made perfect."

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

POSTHUMOUS SERMONS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Posthumous Sermons, with the exception of the last three, were published in the year 1744, in five volumes, under the superintendence of Dr. William King, Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford. See Bower's Biographical and Literary Anecdotes, page 594, 4to.

SERMON I.

THE HUMILIATION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS IV. 10.

He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.

IF religion were not to bear only upon the unshakeable bottom of divine authority, but we might propose to ourselves in idea what could be fittest to answer and employ those faculties of man's mind that are capable of religious obligation, reason would contrive such a religion as should afford both sad and solemn objects to amuse and affect the pensive part of the soul, and also such glorious matter and bright representations as might feed its admiration, and entertain its more sprightly apprehensions: for the temper of all men in the world is either sad and composed, or joyful and serene; and even the same man will find, that he is wholly acted, in the general tenor of his life, by the vicissitude and interchange of these dispositions.

Accordingly Christianity, in those great matters of fact upon which it is founded, happily complies with man's mind by this variety of its subject. For we have both the sorrows and the glories of Christianity, the depressions and the triumphs, the mournings and the hosannas: we have the affecting sadnesses of Christ's fasting, his bloody agony, his crucifixion, and the bitter scene of his whole passion in its several parts and appendages. On the other side we gaze at his miracles, admire his transfiguration, joy at his supernatural resurrection, and (that which is the great complement and consummation of all) his glorious ascension.

The fixed sort of these naturally suit with the composed, fixed, and monastic disposition of some minds, averse from all complacency and freedom; the second invite the joys of serener minds, happier constitutions, and brisker meditations.

Nay, such a divine chequer-work shall we find in the whole contexture of the story of our religion, that we have the light still with the advantage of the shade, and things exhibited with the recommending vicinity of their contraries; so that it is observed, that in the whole narrative of our Saviour's life, no passage is related of him low or weak, but it is immediately seconded, and as it were corrected, by another high and miraculous.

No sooner was Christ humbled to a manger, but the contempt of the place was taken off with the glory of the attendance, in

the ministration of angels. His submission to that mean and coarse ceremony of circumcision was ennobled with the public attestation of Simeon concerning him: his fasting and temptation attended with another service of angels; his baptism with a glorious recognition by a voice from heaven. When he seemed to show weakness in seeking fruit upon that fig-tree that had none, his manifested his power by cursing it to deadness with a word. When he seemed to be overpowered at his attachments, he then exerted his mightiness, in causing his armed adversaries to fall backwards, and healing Malchus's ear with a touch. When he underwent the lash and violent infamy of crucifixion and death, then did the universal frame of nature give testimony to his divinity, the temple rending, the sun darkening, and the earth quaking, the whole creation seemed to sympathize with his passion. And when afterwards he seemed to be in the very kingdom and dominions of death, by descending into the grave, he quickly confuted the dishonour of that, by an astonishing resurrection, and by an argument *ex abundanti*, proved the divinity of his person over and over, in an equally miraculous ascension.

Which great and crowning passage of all that went before it, however it is most true, and therefore most worthily to be assented to, yet still it affords scope for the nobler and higher actings of faith. For reason certainly would now very hardly be induced to believe that upon bare testimony and report, which even those who then saw it with their eyes, that is, with the greatest instruments of evidence, scarcely gave credit to. For it is expressly remarked in Matt. xxviii. 17, that of those who stood and beheld his ascension, though some worshipped, yet others doubted.

It seems things were not so clear as to answer all the objections of their eyes, or at least of their incredulity. But he ascended "in a cloud," as it is said; there was some darkness, something of mist and obscurity that did attend him. Yet a lively potent faith will scatter all such clouds, dispel such mists, conquer this and much greater difficulties. Which faith, since it must rest itself upon a divine word, such a word we have here; and that a full, a pregnant, and a satisfying word, which from the pen of a person infallibly inspired, assures us, that "he who descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."

In the words we have these four things considerable.

I. Christ's humiliation intimated and implied in those words, "he that descended."

II. His glorious advancement and exaltation, "he ascended far above all heavens."

III. The qualification and state of his person in reference to both these conditions; he was the same. "He that descended is the same also that ascended."

IV. The end of his exaltation and ascension, "that he might fill all things."

Of all which in their order. And when I shall have traversed each of these distinctly, I hope I shall have reached both the full sense of the text, and the business of the day.

I. And first of all for *Christ's humiliation and descension.* As every motion is bounded with two periods and terms, the one relinquished, the other to be acquired by it; so in Christ's descension we are to consider both the place from which it did commence, and the place to which it did proceed: the place from whence, we are told, was heaven.

But the difficulty is, how Christ could descend from thence. According to his divine nature he could not; for, as God, he filled the universe; and all motion supposes the mover to be sometimes out of the place to which he moves; and successively to acquire a presence to it; so that nothing that adequately fills a place, can move in that place, unless it moves circularly, but progressively or in a direct line it is impossible. Whither then should the divine nature move where it is not prevented by its own ubiquity? whither should it go where it is not already? And as for Christ's human nature, that could not descend from heaven; forasmuch as it was not first in heaven, but received its first being and existence here upon earth.

This argumentation, we see, is clear and undeniable; how then shall we make out Christ's descension?

The Socinians, who allow Christ nothing but a human nature, affirm that he is said to "descend from heaven," only in respect of the divinity of his original and production; as it is elsewhere said, that "every good and perfect gift descends from above," namely, because it is derived from a divine principle. But his descending being here in the text opposed to his ascending, clearly shows that there is a further and more literal meaning imported in the word.

I answer therefore, that Christ descended according to his divine nature, not indeed by a proper and local motion, as the former arguments sufficiently demonstrate; but because it united itself to a nature here below; in respect of which union to an earthly nature, it might metaphorically be said to descend to the place where that nature did reside. And thus much for the way and manner how Christ did descend.

We are now to direct our next inquiry to the place whither he descended; and for this we are to reflect an eye upon the former verse of this chapter, which tells us, that it was into "the lower parts of the earth;" but what those "lower parts of the earth" are, here lies the doubt, and here must be the explication.

There are several opinions to be passed through before we

can come to the truth. I shall propose them all, that every one may be his own judge, which of them carries in it the greatest probability.

1. Some understand it simply of the earth, as being the lowermost part of the world. But why then could not the apostle have said, that Christ descended *εἰς τὰ κατώτερα τοῦ κόσμου*, and not *τῆς γῆς*, to the lower parts of the *world*, not of the *earth*? but to call the earth the lower part of itself, is an apparent violence to the naturalness of the expression, and indeed not more forced than ridiculous.

2. Some understand it of the grave, which is called the heart of the earth, in Matt. xii. 40: "The Son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Now the heart or middle of the earth is the lowest part of it, forasmuch as every progression beyond that is an access nearer to heaven, which encloses and surrounds the whole earth, and the nearer we come to heaven, the higher we are said to go. But this exposition is more artificial than natural, more ingenious than solid; and only to be valued as we do those things that are far fetched.

3. Some understand it of hell itself, the place of the damned; and our creed tells us, that Christ descended into hell: but to this I answer, that it relates not at all to our present purpose, whether Christ descended into hell or no; but the thing to be proved is, that hell, or the place of the damned, is the lower parts of the earth; which we deny, as being contrary both to the judgment of the church and of reason; it being hard to conceive what capacity there can be within the earth, for the reception, not only of the souls, but of the bodies of all the persons that for six thousand years shall have peopled the world, the number only of those who shall be saved (which we are told are very few) being excepted.

4. But fourthly, the quick-sighted Romanists, forsooth, who can see further into the earth than other men, have, by the help of this text, spied in it a place called purgatory, or rather the pope's kitchen, for certain it is that nothing so much feeds his table. Now here, they say, are those "lower parts of the earth," whither Christ descended; but before they prove that Christ came down hither, I would have them prove that there is such a place.

They say they prove it from 1 Pet. iii. 19, where it is said, that "Christ by his spirit went and preached to the spirits in prison;" the words in the Greek are, *ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν*. But do these words imply that those spirits were in prison at that time that he preached to them? Not at all; but the entire sense of them is this: He preached to the spirits in prison, that is, Christ in the days of Noah, by his spirit preached to and strove with those disobedient spirits, which spirits are now in prison, or in hold, for so

ἐν φυλακῇ signifies; that is, they are "held in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day:" as, suppose I should say, that Christ preached to many hundred souls in hell, does it follow hence, that they were in hell while he preached to them? No, but it must be taken in a divided sense, that many hundreds, who are now in hell, were once preached to by Christ.

And thus having shown the nullity of this argument, I think it is clear that Christ descended not into purgatory, for that which is not, cannot be descended into: but I wonder why men should be so solicitous in finding out a purgatory: for if they go not to heaven, they need not doubt but that there is room enough in hell, without providing themselves of a third place.

5. In the fifth and last place therefore, I conceive these words in the text to bear the same sense with, and perhaps to have reference to, those in Psalm cxxxix. 15, where David, speaking of his conception in his mother's womb, says, that "he was framed and fashioned in the lowest parts of the earth." In like manner, Christ's descending into the lowest parts of the earth, may very properly be taken for his incarnation and conception in the womb of the blessed virgin.

That this is so, yet with submission to better judgments, I judge upon these grounds.

1st. Because the former expositions have been clearly shown to be, some of them unnatural and forced, and others impertinent: but those four being removed, there is no other besides this assignable.

2dly. It is usual for the apostles to transcribe and use the Hebrew phrases of the Old Testament: and since Paul here uses David's very words, it is most probable that he used them in David's sense.

3dly. I add, that these words, of Christ's descending and ascending, are so put together in the text, that they seem to intend us a summary account of Christ's whole transaction of that great work of man's redemption from first to last; which being begun in his conception, and consummate in his ascension, by what better can his descending be explained, than by his conception, the first part and instance of this great work, as his ascension was the last? So that by this explication the apostle's words are cast into this easy and proper sense, that the same Christ, and eternal Son of God, who first condescended and debased himself so far as to be incarnate and conceived in the flesh, was he who afterwards ascended into heaven, and was advanced to that pitch of sublime honour and dignity, far above the principalities and powers of men and angels.

And thus much for the first thing, Christ's humiliation and descension, both as to the manner how, and the place whither he did descend.

II. I come now in the next place to consider *his exaltation and ascension.* For shall he so leave his glory, as never to reassume it? Shall such a sunbeam strike the earth, and not rebound?

As for the way and manner how he ascended, I affirm that it was according to his human nature, properly and by local motion; but according to his divine, only by communication of properties, the action of one nature being ascribed to both, by virtue of their union in the same person.

As for the place to which he advanced, it is, says the apostle, "far above all heavens." In the exposition of which words it is strange to consider the puerile fondness of some expositors, who will needs have the sense of them to be, that Christ ascended above the empyrean heaven, the highest of all the rest, and there sits enthroned in the convexity and outside of it, like a man sitting upon a globe: for, say they, otherwise, how could Christ be said to have ascended above the heavens? But if they will stick to this term "above," let them also stick to the other, "far above," and then they must not place him just upon the empyrean heaven, but imagine him strangely pendulous, in those *spatia extramundana*, those empty spaces that are supposed to be beyond the world. How improper, and indeed romantic, these conceits are, you easily discern.

But the words of the text have something of figure, of hyperbole, and latitude in them; and signify not, according to their literal niceness, a going above the heavens by a local superiority; but an advance to the most eminent place of dignity and glory in the highest heaven. Besides, the very common use of the word does not of necessity enforce the former interpretation; for we think we say properly enough, that a man is upon the top of a house or tower, if he be but in one of the uppermost parts of it, without his standing upon the weather-cock: but it is the usual fate of such over-scrupulous adherers to words and letters, to be narrow men and bad interpreters.

I have nothing else to add for explication of Christ's ascension, but only to observe and adore God's great and wise methods of exalting, exemplified to us by an instance in his dearest Son. He, we see, is depressed before advanced, crucified before enthroned, and led through the vale of tears to the region of eucharist and hallelujahs. He was punished with one crown before he was rewarded with another, and disciplined by the hardships of shame and servitude to the glories of a kingdom.

And do we now think to have our whole course spun in one even thread? to live deliciously in one world, as well as gloriously in another? to tread softly, and to walk upon paths of roses to the mansions of eternal felicities?

No; it is the measure of our happiness, and ought to be so of our wish too, to be but like Christ. The preferments of heaven will be sure to meet us only in the state of an afflicted, abject

humility. Christ preached upon the mountain, but he lived and acted his sermons in the valley. The way of salvation must needs be opposite to that of damnation. We must (as I may so speak) descend to heaven; for it was Adam's aspiring that brought him down, and Lucifer's fall was but the consequent of his ascension.

III. I come now to the third thing, which is *the qualification and state of Christ's person*, in reference to both these conditions: he was the same: "He that descended is the same also that ascended." Which to me seems a full argument to evince the unity of the two natures in the same person: since two several actions are ascribed to the same person, both of which, it is evident, could not be performed by the same nature.

As for Christ descending, I show that it could not be by his human nature; for that received its first existence on earth, and therefore could not come down from heaven; but it was to be understood of his divine nature, though improperly, and only so, as it became united to a nature here below: but as for his ascending, it is clear that Christ did this by his human nature, and that properly and literally; and yet it is here affirmed, that it was "the same Christ who both ascended and descended;" a great proof of that mysterious economy of two natures in one hypostasis.

The school of Socinus, we have heard, affirms Christ to have descended from heaven, only in respect of his divine and heavenly origination: but how, according to their opinion, can they make it out, that it was the same Christ who ascended? for they affirm concerning the body which he had before his death, and after his resurrection here upon earth, that he did not carry that with him into heaven, but that was left here behind, whether by annihilation, or some secret conveyance of it into the earth by the power of God, they tell us not, nor indeed know themselves; but in the room of it, they say, he had a spiritual ethereal body, with which he ascended into heaven; a body without flesh and bones, a refined, sublimated, angelical body; which are words enough, I confess, but where the sense is, we may go seek. I wonder they do not further explain their subtile notion, and say, that it is a certain body without corporeity.

But though they will not allow the union of two complete natures in the same person, yet they and all the world must grant, that two distinct substances, the soul and the body, go to compound and integrate the man: and I know, according to their usual appellation of him, they will allow him to be "the man Christ Jesus."

Now I demand of them, upon what principles of reason or philosophy they will prove that to be the same compound, when one entire half, that goes to the making of it, is wholly another

thing. When we take white, and mingling it with red, make a third distinct colour; if we could now separate that white from the red, and join it to a blue, do we think that this conjunction would make the same kind of colour that the former mixture did? In like manner can I affirm, that the same soul successively united to two several bodies of a kind wholly diverse, if not opposite, makes the very same compound? If the whole be nothing else but its parts united, essential parts totally changed, I am sure, cannot be the same whole.

Neither let them reply, that this argument savours too much of philosophy, for by saying so, they say only that it savours too much of reason.

I confess there are some passages that fell out after Christ's resurrection, that seem to persuade us that the body he then appeared in was not of the same nature with our bodies now-a-days, nor with that which he himself had before his death: for we read, that "he vanished out of some of the disciples' sight," and that "he came in to them, the doors being shut."

Which considerations, I suppose, drove Origen to assert, that Christ's soul had such a command over his body, and his body such a ductility to comply with those commands, that the soul could contract or expand it into what compass, or transfigure it into what shape it pleased; so as to command it through a chink, or crevice, or represent it sometimes under one form, sometimes under another.

But to this I answer, that however Christ's body, as every body else, is capable of continuing the same, notwithstanding the alteration of its qualities and outward form; yet, that a body of such a dimension should be contracted to such a thinness, as to pass through a chink or crevice, cannot be effected without a penetration of the parts, and a mutual sinking into one another: which those who understand the nature of body know to be a contradiction, and consequently impossible.

As for those scriptures which seem to give colour to the opinion that Christ, after his resurrection, had such an aerial fantastic body, before I answer them, I shall premise that great instance and affirmation that Christ gave of the reality of his body, to his disciples, being frighted at his presence, and supposing they had seen a spirit or apparition, Luke xxiv. 38, 39: "Why," says he, "do such thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." What could be more plain and positive for the clearing of this particular? Certain it is, therefore, that he had the very same body, be the explication of other places that seem to imply the contrary never so difficult.

The first is in Luke xxiv. 31, "He vanished out of their sight." To which I answer, that it is not at all absurd to affirm,

that Christ, by his divine power, might cast a mist before their eyes; or suspend the actings of their visive faculty in reference to himself, while he conveyed himself in the meantime away; or possibly he might depart with so quick a motion, that it was almost instantaneous, and so indiscernible: for either the exceeding quickness or slowness of motion, makes the successive progress of it not observable to the eye, as is manifest from a hundred daily experiments.

For the second place in John xx. 19, where it is said, that "he came amongst his disciples, the doors being shut:" this is capable of an explication that is obvious, and removes all difficulty. For it is not to be understood of the doors being shut in the very act of his entrance, but just antecedently to it; that is, Christ coming to the place found the doors shut; yet notwithstanding, by his immediate power, he caused them to fly open, as the angel did the prison doors at the release of Peter, Acts xii., and then he entered. Thus we read, that the lame walk, the blind see; not indeed while they continued lame and blind, but the lame and blind were first cured of those infirmities, and so made to walk and see.

So Christ did not enter, the doors continuing shut, but the doors that he found fast shut, he by a strange power opened, and so came amongst his disciples, which was enough to affright and amaze them.

But to reduce this to a familiar instance: suppose a stranger or suspicious person should come into a house, and the master of the house should ask his servant whether the doors were shut or open when he came in? surely his meaning is not, did he pass through the door while it was shut? But his sense is, did he find the door shut, and so broke it open, or did he find the door standing open, and so entered? This exposition is natural, and so clears the doubt, that the difficulty itself vanishes, and is but an apparition; and so much for the third thing.

IV. I proceed now to the fourth and last thing; which is, *the end of Christ's ascension*, "that he might fill things."

This also is capable of various interpretation, for this term "all things" may refer,

1st. Either to the scripture, that he might fill, or rather fulfil (for the Greek πληρόω signifies both), all those prophecies and predictions recorded of him in the books of the prophets.

2dly. Or secondly, it may refer to the church, that he might fill all things belonging to that with his gifts and graces; for it is subjoined, that "he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ." Both these expositions I confess are probable. But,

3dly. In the third place, it may relate to all things in the

world, within the whole compass of heaven and earth; and since the words so taken afford us an eminent proof, both of Christ's essential deity, as also of the power with which he was endued as mediator; we shall not let so great a prize slip out of our hands, but prefer and follow this as the most genuine interpretation.

Now Christ may be said thus to fill all things in a double respect.

1. In respect of the omnipresence of his nature and universal diffusion of his Godhead. The schools, in stating the manner how one thing is in another, whereas they make bodies present by circumscription, finite spirits definitive, that is, by being so here, as at the same time not to be there; not improperly, I think, make God to be in all things by repletion: that is, he is so in them, that they are rather in him; spreading such an immense fulness over all things, as in a manner swallows and folds them up within himself.

Such a fulness has Christ as God, by which he fills, or rather overflows the universe, *et ad omnia præsentialiter se habet.* Could there be a more full and apposite proof of this than that place, John iii. 13, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven." He came down from heaven, and at that time was talking with Nicodemus upon earth; and yet even then he was still in heaven. How, but by the omnipresence of his divine nature, that scorned the poor limitations of place, diffused an immense presence every where, and could be in heaven without ascending thither?

But what I say of Christ, as to his divine nature, should I assert the same of his human, it would be both an error in divinity, and a prodigious paradox in philosophy.

Yet the Romanists will have Christ's whole body to be in ten thousand places together, and at once; namely, wheresoever their host is celebrated, and in every particle of that host; which certainly is the greatest absurdity and most portentous piece of nonsense that ever was owned in the face of the rational world.

And the Lutherans, who by a dough-baked reformation, striking off from the Romish errors, have rather changed than corrected this grand absurdity, they assert a consubstantiation, and the consequent of it, the ubiquity of Christ's human nature.

But certainly they have some unanswerable arguments that force their assent to such uncouth propositions. What they are, we shall hear. They argue thus:

Christ, in respect of his human nature, sits at God's right hand; but God's right hand is every where, and consequently Christ's human nature must be so too.

If I might answer a foolish argument according to its folly, I might demand of them, if God's right hand be every where, where then will they place his left? But do not they know

that Christ's sitting at God's right hand is not taken in a metaphysical sense, for his co-existence with it; but is only a phrase, importing God's advancing him to high dignity and honour, as princes use to place their favourites at their right hand.

But they proceed. If Christ's human nature be united to the whole divine nature, then, wheresoever his divine nature is present, there must be also his human. But supposing that his human nature is not every where, and that his divine is, then in those places where the human nature is not, the divine is there without it; and so consequently in those places it is not united to it: for things intimately united must be present together in the same places.

But what pitiful thin sophistry is this! whatever at the first sight it may appear: for they distinguish not a spiritual union from that which is corporeal, and between things having quantity. If indeed, Christ's human nature were united to his divine by way of adequate commensuration one to the other, it would then follow, that if one was where the other is not, the union so far would cease; but the union between these two natures is only by intimate indissolvable relation one to the other; so that wheresoever the divine nature of Christ is present, though his human is not there present too, yet it still holds the same relation to it, as to a thing joined with it in one and the same subsistence. And so much in answer to a sophistical argument brought to defend a misshapen, monstrous assertion.

We see here the first way, how Christ fills all things in the world; namely, by the essential omnipresence of his divine nature. But yet this is not the "filling all things" directly intended in the text; for that was to be consequent to his ascension; "he ascended that he might fill all things;" it accrued to him upon and after his ascension, not before; but his omnipresential filling all things being an inseparable property of his divine nature, always agreed to him, and was not then at length to be conferred on him.

2. In the second place therefore, Christ may be said to fill all things, in respect of the universal rule and government of all things in heaven and earth committed to him as mediator upon his ascension. This is the only "filling all things" that the school of Socinus will allow him; forasmuch as they make him to be God only by office, not by nature; and that his full deity bears date from his ascension; at which time he took possession of the government of the world.

But in this, I must confess, they are so much the less injurious to Christ, since they allow the Father himself to fill all things no otherwise: they acknowledge him indeed to have such an extent of power as to reach all places, persons, and things; but his omnipresence they deny, and confine his being to a circumscribed

residence within the highest heaven; as we may see in Crellius's book *De Attributis Dei*, ch. i. So little ought we to wonder at their denying the deity of the Son, when they have even torn the fairest perfections out of the godhead of the Father.

But to look back upon Christ, now enjoying the end of his ascension, even the sovereignty of all things. This is he, that is now King of kings and Lord of lords, who wields the sceptre of heaven and earth, and wears the imperial crown of the universe. Heaven is his throne, and the thrones of kings his footstool.

He now shines in the head of that glorious army of martyrs, and, wearing the trophies of conquered sin and death, possesses the kingdom of the world by the two unquestionable titles of conquest and inheritance. The angels, those immediate retainers to the Almighty, and ministers of providence, are his attendants; they hear his will, and execute his commands with a quick and a winged alacrity.

All the elements, the whole train and retinue of nature, are subservient to his pleasure, and instruments of his purposes. The stars fight in their courses under his banner, and subordinate their powers to the dictates of his will. The heavens rule all below them by their influences, but themselves are governed by his. He can command nature out of its course, and reverse the great ordinances of the creation. The government, the stress and burden of all things, lies upon his hands. The blind heathen have been told of an Atlas that shoulders up the heavens; but we know, that he who supports the heavens is not under them, but above them.

And to give you yet a greater instance of his sovereignty, he extends his dominion even to man's will, that great seat of freedom, that, with a kind of autocracy and supremacy within itself, commands its own action, laughs at all compulsion, scorns restraint, and defies the bondage of human laws or external obligations.

Yet this, even this absolute principle, bends to the overpowering insinuations of Christ's spirit; nay, with a certain event, and yet with a reserve to its own inviolate liberty, when he calls, it cannot but be willing. My earthly prince may command my estate, my body, and the service of my hand, but it is Christ only that can command my will: this is his peculiar and prerogative.

It remains now that we transcribe this article of our creed into our lives, express his sovereignty in our subjection; and by being the most obedient of servants, declare him to be the greatest of masters: even the blessed and only potentate, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON II.

THE END AND DESIGN OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

EPHESIANS IV. 10.

That he might fill all things.

THESE words exhibit to us the great end and design of Christ's ascension, and without any strain or force laid upon them, are capable of a threefold interpretation; a distinct survey of each of which shall be the business of the present exercise.

1. In the first place then, this term "all things," may refer to the whole series of prophecies and predictions recorded of Christ in the scriptures; which he might be said to fill, or rather to fulfil by his ascension: which signification, as it is most proper to the force of the Greek word,—forasmuch as all other places, which we translate "fulfil," are expressed by this word πληρόω,—so it is most agreeable to the method of the scriptures, speaking of Christ; of whom we never find any great action recorded, which was before pointed at by some prophecy, but it is immediately added, that it was done ἵνα πληρωθῇ, that such or such a scripture "might be fulfilled." And for Christ's ascension, and the consequent of it, his diffusion of the gifts of the Spirit, we have an eminent prediction of that in Psalm lxviii. 18, here referred to by the apostle; "He ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

Concerning which place, it must be confessed, that both the Hebrew and the Septuagint from the Hebrew render it, not "he gave gifts unto men," but "he received gifts amongst men," ἀνέβης εἰς ὕψος, καὶ ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώποις: and for this the Jews, who at all hands lie upon the catch, charge Paul as a perverter of the prophet's meaning, in a false rendition of the sense of the place.

But to repel their calumny, and to salve the credit of our apostle, there may be a double answer applied to this.

(1.) That the apostle did not precisely tie himself to the very words, but followed only the design and sense of the text: and this was the same in both those different words, ἔλαβε καὶ ἔδωκε, he *received* and he *gave*. For the prophet, speaking of it as of a thing at that time future, says, that Christ "received gifts," viz., from his Father: which gifts he was afterwards, in the fulness of time, to pour forth upon men. But the apostle, speaking of it as of a thing in his time past and fulfilled, mentions only his

giving and actual bestowing those gifts, which indeed was the end for which he first received them of his Father.

(2.) But, secondly, if the Hebrew be rendered, not "he received gifts *for* men," but *from* or *amongst* them, as the Jews contend that it ought; forasmuch as the prophet, in that Psalm, relates the conquest God gave his people over their enemies; whereupon he is said to have received gifts from them; as it is the custom for conquerors to set apart and consecrate some of their spoils to their god: I say, if this be admitted, as the plea is very plausible, we affirm then, that it was not Paul's design to use these words "he gave gifts unto men," by way of citation out of David; but having by a kind of transumption and accommodation borrowed those former words of his, "He ascended up on high, he led captivity captive," to show how great a triumph God made over those greater enemies, sin and death, in the ascension of Christ, that he might now also express how much this spiritual triumph did exceed those temporal ones that God wrought for his people over their temporal enemies; whereas the psalmist says, that upon those triumphs "he received gifts from men," Paul here adds these words of his own, that upon this greater triumph in the ascension of Christ, "he gave gifts unto men;" according to which sense the words carry in them an elegant antithesis, designed to set forth the excellency of one above the other, by how much it is more excellent to give than to receive. And thus we have a full vindication of the apostle.

But here, for the further illustration of Christ's "filling all things" in this sense, I cannot pass over that useful observation of Grotius about the word πληρόω, that it does not signify only a bare giving an event to a prophecy, many of which, though applied to Christ by the apostles, yet indeed were fulfilled before him; as particularly, that place in Matt. ii., "I have called my son out of Egypt," was fulfilled in the children of Israel, of whom it was first spoken. But because those prophecies had not only a literal and historical, but also a further and a mystical intention, therefore this word πληρόω signifies a completion even to a redundancy, a fulfilling them over and above; namely, such a one as not only reaches their first and historical event, but also verifies their mystical and more remote sense.

And such a filling or fulfilling of the old prophecies and predictions was proper and peculiar to Christ, to whom they all pointed, and in whom they all ended, as in their utmost period, their only centre, their great and last design. And thus much for the first interpretation.

2. But secondly, the term "all things" may refer to the church; which sense I shall most insist upon, as carrying in it the subject-matter of this day's commemoration.

Now Christ, it seems, would not have the fabric of his church inferior to that of the universe: it being itself indeed a lesser

world picked or rather sifted out of the greater, where mankind is brought into a narrower compass, but refined to a greater perfection. And, as in the constitution of the world, the old philosophy strongly asserts that nature has with much care filled every little space and corner of it with body, there being nothing that it so much abhors as a vacuity: so Christ, as it were, following the methods of nature in the works of grace, has so advantageously framed the whole system of the church; first, by an infinite power making in it capacities, and then by an equal goodness filling them.

Chasms and emptinesses are the infelicities of the work, but the disgrace of the workman. Capacity unfilled, is the opportunity of misery, the very nature and definition of want. Every vacuity is, as it were, the hunger of the creation, both an indecency and a torment. Christ therefore would have his body the church not meagre and contemptible, but replenished and borne up with sufficiency, displayed to the world with the beauties of fulness and the most ennobling perfections.

Now the church being a society of men combined together in profession of Christian religion, it has unavoidably a double need or necessity emergent from its very nature and constitution. That is, one of government, the other of instruction; the first agreeing to it simply as a society, the second, as it is such a society. And it is Christ's great prerogative to fill it in both these respects.

(1.) And first in respect of its government, of which excellent and divine thing in general we may say this, that, as at first it could be nothing else but the invention of the infinite, eternal mind; so now it is the vital support and very sinew that holds together all the parts of society. And being of such universal necessity, there must be a policy in church as well as state. The church indeed is a spiritual body, but government is the very spirit of that.

Hereupon it follows in the next verse, that Christ "gave some, apostles; some, evangelists; some, prophets; some, pastors and teachers;" part of which are names importing rule and jurisdiction.

But yet in all this catalogue of ecclesiastical officers, we find no lay-elders, no church-aldermen, no spiritual furs; nor yet in the whole current of antiquity, till they dropped from the invention of a late impostor, who being first expelled by the popular rout, became afterwards obnoxious to it, and so had no way to make himself chief in the government, but by allowing them a share. But Geneva certainly is not the mother-church of the world, nor are Mr. Calvin and Mr. Beza fit correctors of antiquity, or prescribers to posterity; nor ought this new fashion in church-government to be therefore authentic, because derived to us from France.

(2.) The church being thus framed into the economy of a governed body, stands equally in need of instruction. For inasmuch as the doctrine it professes grows not upon the stock of natural principles, so as to be deducible from thence by the strength of reason and discourse, but comes derived from immediate and divine revelation; it requires the helps and assistances of frequent inculcation, to water and keep it alive upon the understanding and the will, where nature gives it no footing from any notions within, but what it receives from the force and arts of external impression.

Now for this also, Christ made a full and glorious provision by that miraculous diffusion of the Holy Ghost, after his ascension, upon those great pastors and representatives of his church, the apostles.

In which notable passage of his conferring the Holy Ghost, we have these two things observable:

I. The time when.

II. The manner how it was given.

I. As for the time in which it was conferred, this is remarkable in a double respect.

1. In respect of Christian religion itself, it being about its first solemn promulgation; which though it was a doctrine most true and excellent, yet certainly it was also very strange and unusual. And this we may observe, that there is no strange institution that can ever be of long continuance in the world, but that which first enters and ingratiates itself by something signal and prodigious.

The beginning of every thing has a strange and potent influence upon its duration. And the first appearances usually determine men either in their acceptance or dislike. Nothing stamps itself so deep in the memory as that which is fresh and new, and not made contemptible by a former acquaintance; and the freshness of every thing is its beginning.

Had not Christ therefore ushered in his religion by miracle and wonder, and arrested men's first apprehensions of it by something grand and supernatural; he had hindered its progress by a disadvantageous setting forth, exposed it naked to infidelity, and so rendered it first disputable, and then despised. It had been like the betraying a sublime and noble composition by a low and creeping prologue, which blasts the reputation of the ensuing discourse, and shuts up the auditors' approbation with prejudice and contempt.

Moses therefore, by the appointment of God, bringing in a new religion, did it with signs and wonders, the mountain burning, and the trumpet sounding; so that it was not so much the divine matter of the law, as the strange manner of its delivery, that took such hold of the obstinate Jews; and possibly Moses

should never have convinced, had he not first frighted their belief.

And this is so necessary upon the very principles of nature; that even those impostors, who have introduced false religions into the world, have yet endeavoured to do it by the same methods by which the true was established. Thus Numa Pompilius settled a religion amongst the old Romans, by feigning strange and supernatural converse with their supposed goddess Egeria. Apollonius Tyanæus, who endeavoured to retrieve gentilism in opposition to Christianity, attempted it by such strange and seemingly miraculous actions. And Mahomet is reported to have planted his impostures by the same way of recommendation. Though in all these, the sober and judicious observer will easily perceive that their miracles were as false as their religions.

But however, this shows how the mind of man is naturally to be prevailed upon; and that in the proposal of so great a thing to it as a new religion, the natural openness and meeting fervours of men's first acceptance are by all means to be secured and possessed; which is more successfully done by a sudden breaking in upon their faculties with amazement and wonder, than by courting their reason with argument and persuasion.

2. But secondly, the time of Christ's sending the Spirit is very remarkable in respect of the apostles themselves. It was when they entered upon the full execution of their apostolic office; and from followers of Christ became the great leaders of the world.

During the time of their discipleship, and Christ's converse with them upon earth, we read of no such wonderful endowments, such variety of tongues, such profound penetration into the mysteries of the gospel. But, on the contrary, with many instances of very thick ignorance, childishness of speech, and stupidity of conception, as appears from their many weak and insignificant questions proposed to Christ; their gross dulness to apprehend many of his speeches, in themselves very plain and intelligible: so that Christ is almost perpetually upbraiding them upon this account, as in Luke ix. 41, "How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?" and Matt. xv. 16, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" and Luke xxiv. 25, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have said;" with many other such increpations; which shows, that while they were yet under Christ's wing, and, as it were, in the nonage and minority of their apostleship, they were not the most seraphic doctors in the world.

But when Christ brings them forth upon the stage of a public office to act as his commissioners and ambassadors, to gather and to govern a church in his name; immediately, like Saul upon his being anointed king, they step forth men of another spirit, great linguists, powerful disputants, able to cope with the Jewish San-

hedrim, to baffle their profoundest rabbies, and to out-reason the very Athenians. With their faculties strangely enlarged, their apprehensions heightened, and their whole mind furnished with that stock of endowments and rare abilities, that in others are the late and dear-bought acquisitions of large parts, long time, and severe study.

I confess there is something in office and authority that of itself raises a man's abilities; and the very air and genius of government does, as it were, inspire him with that largeness and reach of mind, that never appeared in the same person yet in the state of privacy and subjection; so that government oftentimes does not only *indicare virum*, but *facere;* insensibly mould and frame the man that has it, to a fitness for it; and at length equals him to his employment; raising him above all the personal defects and littlenesses of his former condition; sublimating his parts, changing his thoughts, and widening his designs. The reason and philosophy of which I shall not inquire into, the thing itself being clear from experience.

Now that the apostles felt these natural influences from their apostolic employment, we have no reason to deny. Yet certainly these could not work in them such a stupendous change. This could be ascribed to nothing, but to those omnipotent assistances of the Spirit descending upon them from heaven, and investing them in their office, by so magnificent and miraculous an installation.

And here I cannot but reflect upon the brutish folly and absurd impudence of the late fanatic decriers of the necessity of human learning, in order to the ministerial function, drawing an argument from this, that the first and greatest ministers of the church were persons illiterate, and not acquainted with the academy, but utterly ignorant of the arts and sciences, the study of which takes up so much of our time, and draws after it so much of our estimation.

Which argument, though they vaunt in as their greatest and most plausible, yet there is none that so directly strikes at the very throat of their cause. For whereas God found the apostles upon their first access to the ministry thus naked of those endowments, he, by a miracle, supplies what their opportunities permitted them not to learn, and by immediate power creates in them those abilities which others by their industry acquire.

Had not the knowledge of tongues and the force of disputation been necessary to a divine, would God have put himself to a miracle to furnish the apostles with such endowments, in themselves so useless, and in these men's judgment also pernicious? But such persons are below a confutation, and made only to credit what they disapprove.

Now concerning the time of the effusion of the Holy Ghost, upon comparing one scripture with another, there seems to me a

very considerable doubt very near a contradiction, and therefore worthily deserving our explication.

The giving of the Holy Ghost is by many clear scriptures affirmed to be after Christ's ascension: nay, his ascension is made not only antecedent, but also causal to it, John vii. 39, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." And yet in John xx. it is said that Christ, a little before his ascension, conferred the Holy Ghost upon his disciples, ver. 22: "And he breathed upon them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Now these places seem directly contradictory.

To which I answer, that if the giving of the Holy Ghost be in both places to be understood for one and the same thing, they certainly contradict one another. Wherefore, to avoid this we must allow a double giving of the Holy Ghost: one, in which Christ conveys the ministerial power; the other, in which he confers ministerial gifts and abilities. Now it was the first of these that happened before Christ's ascension, as is clear from the following words in ver. 23, "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted:" which we know is the great instance of ministerial power and authority. And this, by the way, excellently explains the sense of our church, as it uses the same words in the ordination of priests, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Whereby she does not profess to convey to the person ordained ministerial gifts and abilities, but only ministerial power.

But this solemn giving of the Holy Ghost after Christ's ascension, was a conferring gifts, graces, and abilities upon the apostles, to fit them for the discharge of their ministerial office and power, which had been conveyed to them by the former giving of the Holy Ghost before Christ's ascension. And thus we have given a fair accommodation to these places of scripture.

And so having considered the first thing observable in Christ's giving the Holy Ghost, viz. the time when; I pass now to

II. The second, which is *the manner how it was conferred.* And here the more brevity is required; the thing being so eminently known to us all upon that full description of it in Acts ii. 2, 3; as, that the Holy Ghost descended and sat upon the apostles in the form of cloven fiery tongues, ushered in with the sound of a rushing mighty wind. The various significancy of which circumstances would furnish out matter for a year's discourse. And as for the popish writers and commentators, they are almost endless in this particular, so anatomizing the miracle into all its minute particles, and spinning out every circumstance into infinite allusions and metaphors: which indeed is their custom in treating of most of the grand passages of the gospel, till they have even made their religion itself but a metaphor, that is, something like a religion, but not a religion.

But the design of this great action being to signify and to

transmit spiritual notices by sensible conveyances, it must not wholly be passed over in silence.

Briefly therefore, it exhibits to the world the great means chosen by God for the propagation of the kingdom of Christ. The apostles, beating upon that general misconceit of the Jews about the kingdom of the Messiah, in the preceding chapter, ver. 6, asked Christ, "Whether he would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel;" and questionless, in the strength of that prejudice, they expected here some strange appearance of angels that should conquer the world before them, and bring all nations to the Jewish yoke and subjection.

But suddenly, by a new kind of warlike preparation, they receive no other weapons but tongues, the proper badges of him that is the eternal Word, weapons that draw no blood, break no bones; their only armour and artillery was variety of languages, that fitted them more to travel over than to conquer the world; and thus was that first cause of the world's confusion made the great instrument of its salvation.

And as these tongues were a proper representation of the gospel, so the peculiar nature and efficacy of this gospel was emphatically set forth by those attending circumstances of the fire and the mighty wind, both of which are notable for these two effects: 1. To cleanse. 2. To consume and destroy.

The gospel came like a great and mighty wind to dry and cleanse a dirty and polluted world; like a fire to purge and carry off that dross that had spread and settled itself in the inmost regions of our nature. The design of Christianity was nothing else but to make virtue as universal and as natural to men as vice, as desirable to their thoughts, and as suitable to their affections. Christ's intent was not so much to amuse men's reason with the belief of strange propositions, but to refine their manners, to correct their tempers, to turn vultures into doves, goats into sheep; to make the drunkard once for all vomit up his sin; to bring the wanton only in love with purity, and to see no beauty but in holiness; to make men, of covetous, cruel, and intemperate, to become liberal, courteous, and sober; in a word, to be new creatures and excellent persons.

And therefore, he that in the profession of so pure and noble a religion, thinks not of the design of it, but only hears, and never feels the word; to whom it comes only in the sound of the wind, but not in the force and efficacy of the fire: who in the midst of all spiritual helps, of the several methods of amendment and renovation; as, seasonable sermons, continual prayers, frequent sacraments, and the like; yet carries his old base inclinations fresh and lively about him, and cannot say that he ever conquered so much as one habitual sin, nor got the better of any one vile appetite: but remains sordidly obnoxious, and a slave to all its motions and returns; so that by a desperate vicissitude

of sin and duty, he hears and sins, prays and sins, partakes and sins; and that perhaps with a better stomach than before; till, by such a continual mockery of God, he comes at length to have finished the fatal round of reprobation. Such a one will find, that that word which could not cleanse him will be a wind to blast, and a fire to consume him; and that the same Spirit that only breathed in gentle, but neglected persuasions, will at length, like a resistless tempest, rage in the sad effects of incurable breaches and a final confusion.

SERMON III.

ON DILIGENCE IN THE WORK OF RELIGION.

JOHN IX. 4.

The night cometh, when no man can work.

THESE words, as they lie in the context, are a general maxim or assertion, assigned as a reason of Christ's constancy and assiduity in the particular discharge of those works, which, as mediator, he was to perform while he was yet conversant in the world. And for the figurative scheme of the words, there is nothing more usual in the dialect of scripture, than to set forth and express the time allotted for this life by *day;* and the time and state after life, which is death, by *night:* the reasons of which similitude being very natural and obvious, to be exact and particular in recounting them would be but to tell men what they know already, and consequently a work both precise and superfluous.

The sense of the text seems most naturally to lay itself forth in these three propositions.

I. That there is a work allotted, begun, cut out, and appointed to every man, to be performed by him while he lives in the world.

II. That the time of this life being once expired, there is no further opportunity or possibility of performing that work.

III. That the consideration of this ought to be the highest and the most pressing argument to every man, to use his utmost diligence in discharging the work incumbent upon him in this life.

I. For the first of these, *That there is a work cut out*, &c., we must observe, that every man may be considered under a double capacity or relation.

1. As he is a part or member of the body politic, and so is not his own, but stands included in and possessed by the community. In which capacity he is obliged to contribute his proportion of help to the public; as sharing from thence, with others, the benefits of society, and so being accountable to make it some retribution, in his particular station and condition.

2. A man may be considered as he is a member and subject of a spiritual and higher kingdom. And in this capacity he is to pursue the personal, yet great interest of his own salvation. He is sent into this world to make sure of a better; to glorify his Maker by studying to save himself; and, in a word, to aim at enjoyments divine and supernatural, and higher than this animal life can aspire to.

Now these two capacities are very different: by the former, a man is to approve himself a good citizen; by the latter a good Christian: and though these relations have their precise limits and distinctions; yet we are not to be ignorant of the subordination of one to the other, as its superior. So that if they chance to clash and thwart, the inferior must give way; nor must a man do any thing to preserve a civil interest that is contrary to a spiritual, and the greater obligations lying upon him with reference to the good of his soul, and the invaluable concerns of felicity in the other world. The distinction of a politic and a private conscience is a thing that true reason explodes, and religion abhors, as placing the matter of duty under a contradiction, and consequently can be nothing but an art to give a man satisfaction in the midst of his sin.

We have seen then how every man sustains a double capacity; according to which he has also a double work or calling:

1. A temporal one, by which he is to fill up some place in the commonwealth by the exercise of some useful profession, whether as a divine, lawyer, or physician; a merchant, soldier, mariner, or any inferior handicraft; by all which, as by so many greater and less wheels, the business of the vast body of the public is carried on, its necessities served, and its state upheld.

And God, who has ordained both society and order, accounts himself so much served by each man's diligent pursuit, though of the meanest trade, that his stepping out of the bounds of it to some other work (as he presumes) more excellent, is but a bold and thankless presumption, by which the man puts himself out of the common way and guard of Providence. For God requires no man to be praying or reading when the exigence of his profession calls him to his hammer or his needle; nor commands any one from his shop to go hear a sermon in the church, much less to preach one in the pulpit.

God, as the Lord and great Master of the family of the universe, is still calling upon all his servants to work and labour; a thing so much disdained by the gallant and the epicure, is yet that general standing price that God and nature has set upon every enjoyment on this side heaven; and he that invades the possession of any thing, but upon this claim, is an intruder and a usurper. I have given order, says the apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 10, "that if any one refuse to labour, neither should he eat." It is the active arm and the busy hand that must both purvey for the

mouth, and withal give it a right to every morsel that is put into it.

Some perhaps think they are not born to labour, because they are born to estates. But the sentence that God passed upon Adam is universal; we find in it no exception or proviso for any noble or illustrious drone: no greatness can privilege a man to lie basking in sloth and idleness; and to eat the labours of the husbandman's hand, and drink the sweat of his brow; to wallow and sleep at ease only as a useless lump of well clothed, well descended earth; earth for heaviness only, but not for fruitfulness, serves no other end of society, but only to make one in a number.

But it may be replied, Shall those whom God has blessed in the world, and, as it were, by a particular mark of his providential favour exempted from the general curse of toil and labour, be obliged to work in a trade, or to be of such or such a laborious profession? No, I answer, that they need not, nor is this the thing contended for, but simply that they should labour and fill up all the hours of their time, by employing themselves usefully for the public; and there are superior and more noble employments in which this labour may be sufficiently exerted. For is any one so rich or high as to be above the labour of doing good to a whole neighbourhood, of composing differences, studying the customs of his country, reading histories, and learning such arts as may render him both eminent and useful, serviceable to the public both in peace and war?

If it be answered, that he stands in need of none of all these, as being already abundantly supplied with all the plenties and supports of life. To this also I rejoin, that they are not only a man's own personal needs, but the general needs of society that command a supply and relief from his labour; add to this also, in the second place, that the obligation to labour, lying upon men, is not founded upon their needs and necessities, but upon God's command, as its proper reason; which command he has laid universally and impartially upon all; and he that excuses himself from all labour, the common lot of mankind, by loading it with the odious name of servility, should do well to consider whether the custom of a place, the vogue of his dependants, and his own little arts of evasion, will be able to bear him out in so broad a contempt of an express command; and to rescue him from that thundering sentence levelled so directly at him, in Matt. xxv. 30, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

2. Correspondent to a Christian's other, that is, his spiritual capacity, he has also a spiritual calling or profession; and the work that this engages him to, is that grand one of "working out his salvation;" a work that a life is too little for, had a man any thing more than a life to bestow upon it: a work that runs

out into eternity, and upon which depends the woe or welfare of an immortal soul.

Now this work is threefold. 1. To make our peace with God. 2. To get our sins mortified. 3. To get our hearts purified with the contrary graces.

1. And for the first of these, the making our peace with God. We know how tedious a work it is to reconcile or appease a potent enemy amongst men: frequent addresses must be made, great and irksome submissions must be digested; days must be spent in attending, and nights in projecting how to assuage, and qualify, and remove the swelling disgust; and recover a place in that breast that has heen boiling with rancour and enmity, and designs of mischiefs. Many years perhaps go over a man's head, before he gets any ground upon such a one, if, peradventure, he succeeds at last; so hard, so troublesome, and discouraging a task it is, to win back a lost affection. Now every man must know that upon his very first coming into the world, he has this huge task upon him, to appease and pacify a great enemy; an enemy so much the harder to be pacified, because once a friend. This enemy is God, and therefore his enmities must be commensurate to his person, that is, infinite and unlimited. And it has this property also, that it is an enmity not commencing upon a mere grudge, but upon an injurious violation of his justice, and consequently not to be laid down without satisfaction. This satisfaction was to be infinite, and so impossible to be exhibited by a finite nature. The case being thus, Christ, the eternal Son of that offended God, was pleased to offer himself as a surety and a ransom in our behalf; so as to answer and satisfy all the demands of offended justice.

A satisfaction therefore there is made for us, but so made, that there are conditions required on our parts, before there can be any application of it to our persons, and if these conditions are not reached, we may die with pardons in our Bibles, but not at all belonging to us. Now these conditions are, faith and repentance; words quickly uttered, but things not so easily effected. There must pass such a change upon our natures; such a renovation of the very spirit of our minds, as may amount to the verification of this of us, that we are "new creatures." The new creature is the subject of justification. And being once justified, the apostle tells us, Rom. v. 1, "we have peace with God."

But how is it possible to establish a peace between natures of the widest distance and the fiercest opposition? such as is the most holy, pure, and just nature of God, and the nature of man polluted and envenomed by original corruption. Can fire and stubble strike a league together and be friends? Can guilt and justice unite and embrace? No, nothing of any reconcilement was to be expected, till such time as repentance should cleanes this Augean stable, and the Spirit of God infuse into the soul a

new principle called faith; which principle shall really translate a man into another family, advance him to the privilege of adoption, and so make him a son and an heir to the God of heaven, by the merits of the second Adam, who was an outlaw and a traitor by the first.

2. The second work that we are to do, is to get our sins mortified. For after we are transplanted from the state of nature into a state of grace, we are not presently to think that our work is wholly done. For after the Israelites were possessed of Canaan, they had many of the Amorites, and other enemies, to conquer and drive out before them. Every man has corrupt sinful habits that have overspread, and, as it were, engarrisoned themselves in the most inward parts of his soul; habits deeply fixed, and not easily dispossessed. These are the adversaries that he is to encounter and to wage war with; adversaries that have all the advantages against him imaginable; such as he must make his way to through his own heart, and open his bosom, that the weapon may reach them.

The sharpest, the most afflicting, and yet the most concerning part of a Christian's duty, is the mortification of his sin. For it is, as it were, a man's weeding of his heart; he shall find it a growing evil; an evil that by a cursed fertility will sprout out after the cutting. For scarce any weed is fetched up at once; the gardener's hand and hook must be continually watching over it; and he accounts his ground preserved, if it is not overrun.

Let a man make experiment in any one vice; only let it be such a one as is agreeable and incident to the several ages of man; as for instance, be it pride: for the extirpation of which, we will suppose a man, by the influences of a preventing grace, very early in his attempts against it, and laying the axe to the root of this towering vice in his very youth. Yet, does it fall before him suddenly and easily? does the first foil or blow make him victorious, and enable him to set his foot upon the neck of his conquered enemy? No, there are many vicissitudes in the combat; sometimes he seems to get that under, sometimes that seems to be above him. And what, through the strength of its hold, and the treachery of its working, a man finds enough to exercise and humble his old age; and perhaps after all his conflicts with it, goes out of the world, only with this half-trophy (enough indeed to save him) that he was not overcome.

Now what I say of this is equally true of all other vice; and he that has a voluptuous, an intemperate, or a covetous heart to deal with, will find work enough laid out for him for this life. And let him beware that he ply his spiritual warfare so, that after forty, fifty, or threescore years, h s vice is not as lively in his aged bones, and under his hoary hairs, as ever it was; and he die a decrepit, aged sinner, but yet in the youth and vigour of his sin.

3. The third work incumbent upon every man from his Christian calling, is to get his heart purified and replenished with the proper graces and virtues of a Christian. Christianity ends not in negatives. No man clears his garden of weeds, but in order to the planting of flowers or useful herbs in their room. God calls upon us to dispossess our corruptions, but it is for the reception of new inhabitants. A room may be clean, and yet empty; but it is not enough that our hearts be *swept* unless they be also *garnished;* and that we lay aside our pride, our luxury, or covetousness, unless humility, temperance, and liberality, rise up and shine in their places. The design of religion would be very poor and short, should it look no further than only to keep men from being swine, and goats, and tigers, without improving the principles of humanity, into positive and higher perfections. The soul may be cleansed from all blots, and yet still be left but a blank.

But Christianity, that is of a thriving, aspiring nature, requires us to proceed from grace to grace; "to virtue adding patience, to patience temperance, to temperance meekness, to meekness brotherly kindness," and the like; thus ascending by degrees, till at length the top of the ladder reaches heaven, and conveys the soul so qualified into the mansions of glory.

I showed before the difficulty of mortification, and we are not to think that it is at all less difficult to make a depraved heart virtuous, to force the soil of an ill temper, and, as it were, to graft virtuous habits upon the stock of a vicious nature. We see those that learn a trade, and the habit of any mechanic art, must yet bestow time and toil in the acquiring of it; though perhaps they have also a natural propensity to the art they are in pursuit of. Which being so, with how much more difficulty may we imagine a man to get humility or heavenly-mindedness, while all the appetites, and the very nerves of his soul, strive against it, and endeavour to pull down as fast as he can build up.

True it is therefore, that there is not one virtue that is produced in the soul of fallen man, but is infused into it by the operation of God's Spirit. And if any one should hereupon except, first, To what purpose then is our endeavour in this matter, if the Spirit of God works all? And secondly, Whence is it that these virtues are not in an instant conveyed into the heart in their full perfection, but appear and show themselves only gradually, and by certain steps and increases?

To both these doubts this one answer will give full satisfaction, namely, that habits, though they are infused, do yet come after the manner of such as are acquired. Though our working produces not those habits, yet the Spirit infuses them into us while we are working; and that in those gradual proportions, that in the whole action it still maintains an imitation of the course of

nature, that passes from less profit to more, till at length it arrives at the utmost perfection that it first intended.

And thus I have finished the first proposition, and shown that there is a work appointed to every man to be performed by him while he lives in the world; as also the several parts of that work. I come now,

II. To the second proposition, namely, That the time of this life being once expired, there remains no further opportunity or possibility of performing this work.

There is no repenting when we are once nailed up in our coffins; no believing in the grave; no doing the works of charity and temperance in the dust, or growing new creatures amongst the worms; life is the adequate space allotted by the wisdom of heaven for these matters, which being ended, there is no after-game of retrieving of a bad choice. And so much seems couched under that one word by which the time of this life is expressed, namely, "a day," which, as itis applied to life, may emphatically denote three things.

1. The shortness of it. What is a day, but a few minutes' sunshine? one of the most inconsiderable proportions of time; such a one, as we never grudge to bestow upon any thing; an indiscernible shred of that life that is itself but a span. Yet in these reckonings, God is pleased to rate it by a narrower and a more contemptible measure. God will not dally with us in the great affairs of eternity. He allows us our day, and but our day, to choose whether or no we will be happy for ever. Which shows what a value God puts upon these opportunities, by dispensing them so sparingly, that though we have enough to use, yet we have none to lavish or to lend. We are hurried through the world; our whole life is but (as it were) a day's journey; and therefore certainly it concerns us to manage it so, that we may have comfort at our journey's end.

2. A day, as it denotes the shortness, so it implies also the sufficiency of our time. A day, as short as it is, yet it equals the business of the day. God, that knows the exact proportions of things, took the measure of both; and found that the compass of our lives would fully grasp and take in all our occasions. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" says our Saviour: implying that that was time enough for any man to discharge all the work that God, and nature, and his profession could for that space impose upon him.

And if any one here object the shortness of the time allotted for a Christian's work against the sufficiency of it; though it must be confessed, that should we live never so long, we could not have too much time to do the works of repentance, and to honour God in; yet, according to the economy and measures of the gospel, in which God accepts our services according to their

truth, not their bulk, we have space enough assigned us, even in this short life, to do all that is necessary to bring us to a better. And he that repents not and turns to God in the space of fifty, or threescore, or perhaps seventy years, would, for any thing that is in him, live and persevere in the same impenitence should God add five hundred years to his life. And it is not to be doubted, but God prolongs the life of many here on earth, not with any expectation of their repentance and conversion, as knowing them to be incorrigible, but to serve other ends of his providence in carrying on the affairs of the world.

3. And lastly, by a day is denoted to us the determinate stint and limitation of our time. For none must think that the great and wise governor of the world has left a matter of so high a concernment, and of so direct an influence upon the business of the world, as the life of man is, loose and unfixed. God has concluded all under a certain and unchangeable decree; and we have our bounds, beyond which we shall not pass. For as after such a number of hours, it will unavoidably be night, and there is no stopping of the setting sun; so, after we have passed such a measure of time, our season has its period; we are benighted, and we must bid adieu to all our opportunities.

It is not in the power of man to carve out a longer life to himself. The disposal of times and seasons is part of the divine prerogative; and we know not whether God will allow the fig-tree to grow one or two or three years in his vineyard, but sure it is that when its appointed time is come, it must cumber the ground no longer. God has allotted to men talents of time as well as of other things, to some ten, to some five, to some one. But still we see each man's proportion is set. And he that has but five, must not think to traffic at the rate of him that has ten.

And thus we have taken some survey of the second proposition, namely, that the time of this life being once expired, there remains no further opportunity or possibility of performing the great work incumbent upon us.

III. I descend now to the third and last, which is, That the consideration of this ought to be the highest and the most pressing argument to every man to use his utmost diligence in the discharge of this work.

The enforcing reason of diligence in the undertaking of any work, is the difficulty of the performance of that work. Which difficulty here in our case will appear by comparing of the work to be done, with the time allowed for the doing of it. The time, I showed, was both short and limited, so on the other side, the work to be done is both difficult and necessary.

1. And first for its difficulty: though this has been sufficiently intimated in what was discoursed of before; yet for the further declaration of it, it is observable that there is no action of man-

kind that carries any thing of hardship with it, but the scripture expresses the work and duty of a Christian by it. It calls it a "warfare," and is there any thing so hard and uneasy as what befalls men in the wars? It calls it a "wrestling with principalities and powers;" and is there any thing that employs and distends every joint and fibre of the body, so much as wrestling does? It calls it a "resisting of the devil," and what is more, a "resisting unto blood:" and do men shed their blood and expose their lives to the point of the rapier, and the fury of the enemy, as so much pastime.

But no expressions are so emphatical as those of our Saviour, who calls this work a "taking up of one's cross;" a severe task indeed, whether a man bears the cross, or the cross him. It seems to be our Saviour's design all along, to possess men with a true and impartial representation of those afflicting parts of duty, that will be indispensably required of such as shall give up their names to Christianity.

But above all, there is a place in Luke xiii. 24, which I wonder any considerate person can read without trembling: "Strive," says our Saviour, "to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." What! seek to enter, and yet find no entrance? Good God! what then will become of those numberless numbers of men, who never so much as sought, who never were at the expense of a hearty endeavour to get themselves into these narrow paths of felicity. If those that come "crying, Lord, Lord," and striving, shall yet have the door shut upon them, what shall the lewd, the slothful, and the sottish epicure build the hopes of his salvation upon?

And now, when we have seen the work to be done so highly difficult, and the time to do it in so very short, can there be a more cogent argument, to induce a man to be covetous of every moment, and to make his industry piece out the scantiness of his opportunities? He that has far to go, and much to do, surely is concerned to rise very early; to count not only hours but minutes, to make his work keep pace with his time; and, in a word, to mate the difficulty of the business with the diligence of the prosecution.

2. Next to the difficulty of the work, let us take an argument from its necessity. So far as it is necessary for a man to be saved, so far this work is necessary. Which argument will be heightened by comparing this necessity with the stinted, fixed limitation of the time allotted for the work. There is no deferring it beyond our day: there is no such thing as a to-morrow in the Christian's calendar. And yet, are there any almost that lay this so important a consideration to heart? Men, especially in the flower and freshness of their youth, are infinitely careless: while they think they spend upon a full stock, and have the supplies of nature, the treasures of strength, and opportunity open before

them. They know not the value of those precious never returning hours, that they quaff, and revel, and trifle away, when, as the revocation of the least minute is not to be purchased with all the Persian treasures, or the mines of both the Indies.

But when a man comes at last to reflect upon his past days, and the little sand that is left him to run; when his feet are "stumbling upon the dark mountains," and the shadows of his long night have overtaken him, he never asks the question then, how to pass away time, and to spend the day. None of his hours then lie upon his hands.

Now, when amidst all this, his great account shall also press hard upon him, and the terror of past sins lie heavy upon his conscience; it is worth considering his behaviour in this condition. None surely ever heard such a one calling religion pedantry, deriding a divine, or jesting upon the scriptures. How much soever a wretch and a scoffer he was before, his note is changed now; and we may hear him with the most earnest, humble, and lamentable outcries, plying his offended God:—Lord, spare me for a while! Lord, respite me but for a month, a week, or but a day, to make my peace with thee! Set the long and the dark night back for a few hours, that I may put my accounts in some better order for my appearance before thy dreadful tribunal.

And then for this spiritual guide, whom perhaps, not long since, he could scoff out of his company with disdain; he can now bespeak in a more abject and entreating dialect. Sir, do you think that there is any mercy, any hope for such a one as I? Have I not out-sinned the line of grace? Do you not perceive any mortal symptoms upon my sins? Do you think that my repentance is sincere, that it reaches the conditions of the covenant, and that I may venture my salvation upon the reality of it? Can you give me any solid argument from scripture, or the judgment of divines, that the promises of mercy can extend to a man that has committed such and such sins, and that under such and such circumstances? And that I do not all this while abuse and flatter myself, and only prepare for an eternal disappointment? Never did any client, with so much scruple and solicitousness, inquire of his counsel about the strength or weakness of his title, when he was to go to law for all his estate, and to see his whole fortune canvassed at the bar: as a man in this condition will dispute his title to heaven, and argue his several doubts and misgivings with his spiritual guide or confessor.

No sinner, be he never so hardy and resolved, must think to keep up the same stoutness of heart, when he is just a stepping into the other world. No; these are usually the sad accents and language of the dying sinner, when he perceives his time spent, and in the prospect of his approaching end, lies further bemoaning himself:—Oh, that I were to live over my former days again! that I could command back some of those portions of time that

I sacrificed to my vice, to the humour of my companions, and to those vanities that now serve only to remind me of my folly, and to upbraid me to my face! Oh, that I had employed myself in those severities that I then laughed at, as the needless affected practices of brain-sick, melancholy persons! my work had not been now to do, when my time of working is expired.

I shall close up all with that excellent counsel of the preacher, Eccles. ix. 10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom" (and I may add also, nor working out a man's salvation) "in the grave whither thou goest." And going thither we all are apace: wherefore, since after a few days comes death, and after death judgment, and after judgment an eternal, unchangeable condition; surely it concerns us all so to acquit ourselves in the several parts of our Christian profession, that we may be able to leave the world with that saying of the blessed apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Which God of his mercy at last bestow upon us all, to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON IV.

DIVINE ASSISTANCE PROMISED TO CHURCH GOVERNORS.

[Preached at the consecration of Dr. Seth Ward, bishop of Oxford.]

JEREMIAH XV. 20.

I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, to save thee and deliver thee, saith the Lord.

I shall not pretend to derive episcopacy from the Old Testament, as some do presbytery from Jethro in his humble petition and advice to Moses, concerning the government of the Jews. Which presbytery, though some call the rod of Aaron, yet it more resembles those rods of Jacob, as being designed to midwive a piebald, mixed, ringstraked progeny of church governors into the world. However, it is well that we see from whence it first came, even from Midian, a heathenish place, and unacquainted with the true worship of God, then confined only to the Jews.

But it is pity that the Old Testament does not describe the office of those elders, as well as mention the name; we reading scarce any thing of them there, but that some of them scuffled with Moses and Aaron in the *classis* of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram. As also of their idolatry, Ezek. vi. And of their private examination of Susanna in the story of Daniel; which book, though it be apocryphal, yet the practice remains authentic and canonical.

I say, I shall not derive episcopacy from the Jewish model: though, if I would take their liberty to use allusions for arguments, I might argue a superintendency of bishops over presbyters, from the superiority of the priests over the Levites, much better than they can found their discipline upon the word *elder*, catching at the bare letter, and, according to their custom, stripping the word from the sense: and also with much more probability, than their coryphæus in queen Elizabeth's time argued their discipline from Psalm cxxii. 5, that in Jerusalem "there are set thrones of judgment." By which it seems they would be kings as well as priests, and reign as well as rule, dashing the princes of the earth like a potter's vessel (an expression which they much delight in), till, at length, they crouched to the holy discipline, kissed the rod of Aaron, and so acknowledged their elders for their betters.

But surely this I may argue solidly. That if God instituted such a standing superiority and jurisdiction of the priests over the Levites, then these two things follow: 1. That such a superiority is not in itself absolutely irregular and unlawful. 2. That neither does it carry in it an antipathy and contrariety to the power of godliness.

And yet upon these two suppositions, as upon two standing truths, all their calumnies are commenced; as if there were something in the very vital constitution of such a subordination, that was irreconcileable to the power of godliness. As in respect of the civil power, Calvin, in his commentary upon Daniel, ch. v. 21, that it is common to all kings to jostle out God from his government; a good plea for his abetting the ejection of the lawful prince of Geneva from his government and prerogative.

But to come yet closer to the matter, I do not say that Jeremy was a bishop, nor with an exact parallel argue from one to the other. But we know, that in things of a most different nature, we may yet so sever their peculiar determining differences as to leave some one general reason in which they may unite and agree; so here, setting aside the peculiar differences of the Jewish and the Christian economy, there is a general nature of government, in which both correspond. And therefore, what concerned Jeremy as a church governor, may with good logic be applied to a bishop.

Though indeed the correspondence here may extend to more peculiar and personal resemblances; for might not our bishops lately take up and appropriate to themselves that complaint of Jeremy, in ch. xv. 10, "I have wronged no man, I have neither lent on usury, nor have men lent to me on usury, and yet every man curses me?" Were they not also, like Jeremy, persecuted from prison to prison, and, like him, traduced as secret friends and parties with Babylon, and put into the dungeon for their impartial speaking their consciences? And lastly, notwithstanding their piety, hospitality, and moderation, have they not with Jeremy seen a sad and uncomfortable issue of all their ministerial labours, and been forced to second their prophecies with lamentations?

But now to enter upon the words; we have in them these three things considerable:

I. God's qualification of Jeremy to be an overseer in his church; "I will make thee a fenced brazen wall."

II. The entertainment that he should meet with in the administration of his office, "They shall fight against thee."

III. The issue and success of this opposition, that through God's eminent and peculiar assistance, "they should not prevail against him."

I. And for the first of these, *God's qualification of Jeremy to*

his charge, "I will make thee a brazen fenced wall." Now a wall imports these two things: 1. Enclosure; 2. Fortification.

1. It implies enclosure. God did not think fit to leave his church without enclosure, open like a common, for every beast to feed upon and devour it. Commons are always bare, pilled, and shorn, as the sheep that feed upon them. And our experience has shown us, as soon as the enclosures of our church were plucked up, what a herd of cattle of all sorts invaded it. It contained, as commons usually do, both multitude and mixture.

God said to Moses, "Pull off thy shoes, for the place upon which thou standest is holy ground;" which command would have been but of little force amongst us, where the ground has been therefore accounted common, because holy; church lands have been every one's claim, free and common to all but to churchmen; even as common as the churchyard itself; one to be possessed by the living, the other by the dead.

And the offices of the church were as prostitute as her revenues; every one would be a labourer in that field, from whence they expected so fair a harvest. Here a brewer, here a cobbler, there a butcher; a fair translation from the killing of one flock to the feeding of another.

We have Christ comparing the kingdom of heaven, that is, the church, to traffic, to merchandise: but we might compare ours to a fair, in which there was a general confluence and appearance of all tradesmen; and he that had broke in any, presently set up in divinity.

Wherefore to stave off the profane intrusions of the rabble for the future, we must have an enclosure, and a hedge will not serve turn. So many rotten stakes of lay governors will not raise a fence; a hedge that surrounds an orchard may harbour those thieves that intend to rob it. No, one brazen wall, one diocesan bishop, will better defend this enclosed garden of the church, than a junto of five hundred shrubs, than all the quicksets of Geneva, all the thorns and brambles of presbytery.

2. A wall imports fortification. No city can be secure without it. It is, as it were, a standing inanimate army; a continual defence without the help of defenders.

There is no robbery, but the wall is first broken; no invasion, but it enters through the ruins of this. And therefore David puts up this for Sion in Psalm cxxii. 7, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy bulwarks." Indeed, it had therefore peace and prosperity, because it had walls and bulwarks.

Something must encircle the church, that will both discriminate and protect it. And the altar must be railed in, not only for distinction, but defence.

And such a thing is a church governor, a well qualified bishop. It is he that must secure the church, and not the little inferior pastors about him. There is as much difference between his

protection and theirs, as there is between being encompassed by one continued wall, and a rank of little hills. It was Moses, and not the elders of Israel, that stood in the gap; and for our own parts, if *we* would determine upon whom to place our government, certainly of all others those persons are most unfit to stand in the gap that first made it.

We have seen now what is imported in this metaphor of a wall, as applied to a church governor. Which title that he may make good and verify, there are required in him these three qualifications:

1. Courage, which leads the way to all the rest. A wall, nay, a brazen wall, will not sometimes prove a defence if it is not well manned. Every churchman should have the spirit of a soldier. And pray let us make an exchange: the soldiers have sufficiently invaded the ministers' offices; let ministers now borrow a little of the soldier's courage.

Peter was a resolute and a bold man, and therefore fit to feed Christ's lambs. But he that is timorous and flexible, apt to decline opposition when he can, and when he cannot to yield to it, will be jaded and rid like an ass; and like a pitcher he will be taken and emptied by his own handle, to the ruin of the church and the reproach of his function. He will be used, instead of being obeyed; and men will make him their instrument instead of their governor.

He that does not find in himself a courage to withstand the boldness and violence of a proud seducer, or a popular schismatic, betrays his charge in the very undertaking it. A servile temper in any one is unworthy; but a spirit of servitude in the place of government is unnatural: and he that fears, does something more than serve: he wears his white in his timorous face, and therefore deserves not to wear it in his sleeves.

The greatest attempts in the world that have failed, have miscarried by the treachery of this one quality, irresolution. Fear is a base thing, it enslaves a man's reason to his fancy; and for the most part proceeds from, but always looks like guilt.

And it agrees to no man living so ill, as to a prelate of the church; of whose qualities if we take a survey, we shall find that though learning be his ornament, piety a necessary property, yet resolution is his very essence; and now especially is the want of it inexcusable, when the ground is firm under you, and the heavens, as yet, fair above you; and all the prudent and judicious for you that are about you.

Shall those be able to nose and outbrave you, who take all their courage from guilt and from despair? They deride and tax you for bowing and cringing, pray, therefore, whatsoever you do, do not bow and cringe to them.

2. There is required innocence and integrity. A brazen wall admits of no cracks and flaws; but that which is made of the

baser materials of mud and mortar, of a corrupt conscience, and a corrupter conversation, it gapes into chinks and holes, and quickly totters, being weak and obnoxious,

Hic murus aheneus esto,
Nil conscire sibi.

Let our governors expect reproaches and calumnies, but being thrown at brass they will never stick, upon mud they will; clay cannot mingle with brass or iron. And if men throw dirt, it will not fasten till it meets with dirt.

A bishop's integrity is the best way to silence a factious minister. Let men first wash their hands in innocency, and then let them compass the altar.

In these stars of God's right hand, it is their power indeed that gives them an influence, but it is their innocence that makes them shine. Unblameableness of life, an untainted pureness of manners, it defends the person and confirms the office; as cleanliness, it both refreshes, and, at the same time, also strengthens the body. Rust, it not only defaces the aspect, but also corrodes the substance; and a rusty sword does execution upon nothing but its own scabbard.

Nothing that is vicious can be lasting; vice is rotten, and it makes so. Whatsoever is wicked is also weak, Ezek. xvi. 30, "Since thou doest these things, how weak is thy heart!"

The enemies of the church may fear your power, but they dread your innocence. It is this that stops the open sepulchre, and beats back the accusation upon the teeth of the accuser. The innocent white, it is a triumphant colour. And believe it, when all these calumniators shall have spit their venom, it will be found that an unspotted life will be to them both a confutation and revenge.

For sin they love, that is, to enjoy it in themselves, and to accuse it in others; but God forbid that we should so far gratify their malice as to verify their invectives, or that any crime should sit blushing upon the mitre.

And certainly it were a strange and a shameful thing, to behold vice installed, debauchery enthroned; and to have the whole transaction only the solemnity of an advanced sin, and a consecrated impiety.

3. The third and last qualification that I shall mention, is authority; it is to be a fenced, as well as a brazen wall. The inward firmness of one must be corroborated by the exterior munitions of the other.

Courage is like a giant with his hands tied, if it has not authority and jurisdiction to draw forth and actuate its resolution. Courage is nothing, if it is not backed with a commission.

There are those who absolutely deny any jurisdiction to belong to the church; affirming, that all the apostolical sanctions were

rather advice than law; thus making the church officers to be only like a college of physicians, who, when they consult about, and determine any matter in physic, and prescribe to their patients, their prescriptions command nothing by way of authority, but only propose by way of counsel. Whence it is the less wonder, that Erastus a physician should endeavour to reduce the church to such an imaginary power.

Others, amongst which a person of great learning and discontent, though they proceed not to a plain barefaced denial of the church's jurisdiction, yet they deny the derivation of it from Christ; and derive it from the consent of the primitive Christians, voluntarily choosing governors and a government, and then submitting themselves to their jurisdiction.

But God forbid that the church should be forced either to follow Erastus's prescriptions, or to try her title and plead her cause at an adversary's bar.

Certain it is, that the New Testament makes mention of several acts of ecclesiastical jurisdiction performed by the apostles and others. And we find also several express speeches of Christ that do evidently endue them with such a jurisdiction. But we read not a word, that it came from any such consent, or voluntary submission of a company of Christians combining together, and choosing their own model; and it is strange that in such a matter the antiquary should so much recede from the judgment of antiquity.

But thanks be to God, that our church has not only its jurisdiction from Christ, but also a superadded overplus of confirmation from the secular power, which has piously and prudently provided those laws, that will certainly bind up her breaches and bring order out of confusion, if they be executed with the same courage with which they were enacted.

But if the governors and trustees of the church's power fly back and shrink, and bury a noble law as soon as ever it is born, may not those that made it object to us, that they would have healed us, but we would not be healed. May they not also use that speech of our Saviour to us, "Behold, now your house is left to you desolate." You have lost your advantages, and overlooked your opportunities.

Does it become a man with a sword by his side to beseech? or a governor armed with authority to entreat? He that thinks to win obstinate schismatics by condescension, and to conjure away those evil spirits with the softer lays and music of persuasion, may, as David in the like case, have a javelin flung at his head for his pains, and perhaps escape it as narrowly.

There is a strange commanding majesty in two things, truth and law, and they are now both on the church's side: but there is a dastardly poorness in guilt and faction, that will shrink before the face of justice and the aspect of authority.

And let faction look and speak big in a tumult, and in the troubled waters of rebellion; yet I dare vouch this as a truth of certain event, and that without the spirit of prophecy, that courage assisted with law, and law executed with courage, will assuredly prevail.

Come we now to the second thing, namely,

II. The opposition that the church governor, thus qualified, will be sure to meet with in the administration of his office, expressed in those words, "They shall fight against thee." And this they are like to do these three ways: 1. By seditious preaching and praying. 2. By railing, and libels. 3. And thirdly, perhaps, by open force.

1. And first of all, they will assault their governors with seditious preaching and praying. To preach Christ out of contention is condemned by the apostle; but to preach contention instead of Christ, certainly is most abominable. We have seen men preached into schism, lectured into sacrilege, and prayed into rebellion; the very pulpit has been made to undermine the church.

We have been robbed and plundered in scripture phrase, and have heard rapines and bloodshed not only justified, but glorified.

People in the mean time thronging to the church, not like doves to their windows, but like eagles to their prey; to have their appetites enraged, to have their talons whet against government, and their consciences fired against whatsoever is constituted in church and state.

Read the collections of sermons upon their bloody thanksgivings, and their bloodthirsty humiliations, and upon other occasions before the two houses, which are so many satires against government, so many declamations against the church; every line and period almost spitting poison against monarchy, against discipline and decency; to the reproach of that exercise, to the shame of their calling, and (so far as it lay at the mercy of their practices) to the blot of Christianity.

I say, let any one read that collection, or to speak more properly that magazine of sermons: and then let him confess that it was the sword of the tongue that first drew and unsheathed the other.

He that would hear an invective against the ministry, let him not go to a tavern, to a camp, or to an exchange, but let him repair rather to a church. And when his occasions shall carry him to the market-town, to furnish himself with other commodities, if he would be furnished also with a stock of arguments against loyalty and the church, let him leave the market-place a while and step aside into the lecture.

2. Their second way of fighting against the officers of the church will be by railing and libels. I may seem to commit an

absurdity, I confess, in making this a different head from their preaching and praying. But considering that they speak from the press as well as from the pulpit, and in other places besides the church, we must admit of this distinction. And for this way of opposition by virulent unseemly language, odious terms, and vilifying words, none ever improved their talent to such a height of perfection.

The reverend fathers of the church were the chief mark at which their virulence was levelled: and for these, the more moderate of their opposers were contented to call them by no worse names than whited walls, hypocrites, painted sepulchres, scribes and pharisees, implacable enemies of godliness, limbs of antichrist, retainers to the whore of Babylon. But others, who had a greater measure of this gift, bestowed upon them higher titles, as, devils incarnate, murderers of souls, dumb dogs; and some, that would tip their virulence with more than ordinary wit, have thought fit to call them dumb dogs, that could only bark at God's people.

I could give you a larger catalogue of these gentle, pious, Christian expressions, used by the brotherhood in queen Elizabeth's days; though since much augmented with several additions and enlargements, never before extant, by their worthy successors and true posterity; persons whose mouths are too foul to be cleansed, and too broad to be stopped.

But they are in nothing so copious and eloquent, as when they amplify and declaim upon that old, beaten, misapplied theme of persecution. Which charge, if true, yet they of all men living were the most unfit to make it. But I shall not busy myself to confute, much less to retaliate their aspersions.

3. In the third and last place, they may oppose the governors and government of the church by open force: and this is fighting indeed; but yet the genuine, natural consequent of the other: he that rails, having opportunity, would rebel; for it is the same malice in a various posture, in a different way of eruption; and as he that rebels shows what he can do, so he that rails does as really demonstrate what he would do.

The reason of the thing itself does evince this, and what is yet a greater reason, experience; and he that will not believe what he has felt, nor credit the experience of twenty years, deserves to undergo it for twenty years more.

As the trumpet gives an alarm to battle, so bold invectives do as certainly alarm the trumpet; it is the same breath by which men utter the one, and blow the other.

What insurrections, what attempts, what tumults they may make, we know not; but we know their principles, and we have sufficiently seen them illustrated in their practices; and therefore from what has been done, do but rationally collect what may.

We have heard much of the "power of godliness," by which

indeed is meant only the godly party being in power; and the godly party with them are those who have sworn the destruction of monarchy and of the church, and have bewitched the people with a fardle of strange, canting, insignificant words.

And let men know, that, notwithstanding the disguise of a whining expression and a demure face, there is no sort of men breathing who taste blood with so good a relish, and who, having the power of the sword to second their "power of godliness," would wade deeper in the slaughter of their brethren, and with the most savage implacable violence, tumble all into confusion, ruin, and desolation.

The quicksilver of Geneva is a thing of a violent operation, and cannot lie still long, but it will force its vent through the bowels of a nation; and God grant that it may be thoroughly purged out before it becomes mortal and incurable: and give us the defence of a prudent jealousy, to beware of those whose loyalty and submission lies only in their want of occasion.

We have now despatched the first two things considerable in the text; in which, as in a set battle, we have seen the armour and preparations of defence in the first place, and the assault and opposition in the second. It remains now,

III. That, as in all fights, we see *the issue and success*, which is exhibited to us in these words, "But they shall not prevail against thee."

It is a bold venture to foretell things future, because it is infamous to lie under the shame of a mistaken prediction, and some, if they had prophesied less, perhaps would have preached better.

Things future fall under human cognizance only these two ways: 1. By a foresight of them in their causes. 2. By divine revelation.

1. For the first of these, moral causes will afford but a moral certainty; but so far as the light of this shines, it gives us a good prospect into our future success.

For which is most likely to prevail, a force marshalled into order, or disranked and scattered into confusion? A force united and compacted with the strength of agreement, or a force shrivelled into parties, and crumbled into infinite subdivisions? A government confirmed by age, and rooted by antiquity, and withal complying with the conveniencies of society; or a government sprung up but yesterday, and yet become intolerable today; having the rigour, without the order of discipline; like a rod or twig, both for its smart, and also for its weakness.

2. But besides the arguments of reason, we have the surer ground of divine revelation. God has engaged his assistance, made himself a party, and obliged his omnipotence as a second in the cause; "I am with thee to save thee and deliver thee, saith

the Lord." We have something more to plead than God's providence, their old heathenish argument. We have his word for our rule, and his promise for our support. He that undertakes God's work, may, by a legitimacy of claim, challenge his assistance.

Yet neither are we destitute of arguments from providence, so far as they may be pleaded. For has God, by a miracle, raised a church from the dead only to make it capable of a second destruction? Has he buoyed it up from the gulfs and quicksands of faction and sacrilege, only to split it upon the rocks of a new rebellion? Has he scattered those mists of delusion, discovered the cheat of a long, religious fallacy, and so strangely opened men's eyes, that he may more strangely put them out again? Or will Christ invert the order of his works, and having cured us, do another miracle only to make us blind?

No, certainly; for as God does not create but with a design to preserve, so he does not deliver but with a purpose to defend.

But you will say, Does not our own late experience stare us in the face, and confute this assertion? For has not the church been exposed to the lust, fury, and rapine of her adversaries? Have they not prevailed and trampled upon her? Have they not ruined, reformed, and torn her in pieces as they pleased? And what assurance have we, that what has been done already may not be done again? And then, what will become of the truth of this, "They shall not prevail against thee?"

To this I answer two things, with which I shall conclude.

(1.) That even those enemies of the church, in the late dismal swing of confusion, did not prevail against her. For that only is a prevailing, that is a final conquest.

But this was only a cloud that hindered the sunshine for a while, but did not put out the sun. A veil drawn over the church's face, not to extinguish her beauty, but to hide it for a time. In short, it was only an interruption, not an abolition of her happiness.

(2.) But secondly, I add, that he who is pillaged or murdered in the resolute performance of his duty, is not properly prevailed against.

It has been a constant tradition of the church, that Jeremy himself, to whom this very promise was made, was barbarously knocked o' the head and killed in Egypt, for his impartial prophesying; yet still, this promise was the word of God, and therefore doubtless could not fall to the ground, however the prophet might.

There is a great deal of difference between a murder and a conquest.

So that should God again let loose the reins to the former tyranny; should he once more give the sword to faction, ignorance, and discontent, and arm the diabolical legion that lately

possessed us, and has been since cast out; should he commission all this rabble to harass and run down the nation with plunders, bloodshed, covenants, and sequestrations; yet still God will verify these words to every faithful courageous officer in his church, "They shall not prevail against thee."

Such a one may be plundered indeed, and yet not undone; he may be sequestered, imprisoned, yea, and slain, and yet, according the soberest judgment of reason, not conquered.

Some may now think, that the work of this exercise is not discharged, unless directions are given for the management of the episcopal office; but I persuade myself, that our government advances none to this office, but such as are able to direct themselves. However I, for my part, had rather promise obedience, than proffer counsel to my superiors.

The business I undertook was, to speak encouragement to those that shall sit at the stern of the church in such a discouraging age, and to tell them that God will make them fenced brazen walls. And he that strikes at a wall of brass may maul his own hands, but neither shake nor demolish that.

Wherefore let the furies of a new confusion break forth, let the spiritual trumpets sound another march to rebellion, and the pulpit drums beat up for volunteers for the devil, and threaten the church once more.

Yet the governors of it may here take sanctuary in the text; and with confidence from hence bespeak their opposers.

Who shall fight against us? it is God that saves. Who shall destroy? it is the same God that delivers.

To which God, fearful in praises, and working wonders, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON V.

ON THE GOSPEL BEING THE TRUTH AFTER GODLINESS.

TITUS I. 1.

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.

IN the last words of this verse, about which only our present discourse shall be concerned, we have a full though compendious account of the nature of the gospel, ennobled by two excellent qualities. One, the end of all philosophical inquiries, which is *truth;* the other, the design of all religious institutions, which is *godliness;* both united, and as it were blended together in the constitution of Christianity.

Those who discourse metaphysically of the nature of truth, as to the reality of the thing, affirm a perfect coincidence between truth and goodness; and I believe it might be easily made out, that there is nothing in nature perfectly true but what is also really good. For although it is not to be denied that true propositions may be framed of things in themselves evil, yet still it is certain that the truth of those propositions is good. Nothing so bad as the devil, or worse than a liar; yet this affirmation, that the devil is a liar, is hugely true and very good.

It would be endless to strike forth into the elogies of truth; for as we know, it was the adored prize for which the sublimest wits in the world have always run, and sacrificed their time, their health, their lives, to the acquist of it; so let it suffice us to say here, that as reason is the great rule of man's nature, so truth is the great regulator of reason.

Now in this expression of the gospel's being "the truth which is after godliness," these three things are couched.

1. That it is simply a truth.

2. That it is an operative truth.

3. That it is operative to the best of effects, which is godliness.

1. And for the first of these; it is a truth, and upon that account dares look its most inquisitive adversaries in the face. The most intricate and mysterious passages in it are vouched by an infinite veracity: and truth is truth, though clothed in riddles, and surrounded with darkness and obscurity; as the sun has still the same native inherent brightness, though wrapped up in a cloud.

Even those transcendent enigmas of the trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the resurrection of the dead, they all challenge our assent upon the score of their truth. And that three is one and one three, is altogether as true as that three is three, though far from being so plain. It is hard indeed to conceive a reparation of the same numerical body having been transformed by so many changes, yet we have the divine word for it; and death itself is not more sure, than that men shall rise from the dead.

Now the gospel being a truth, it follows yet further, that if we run through the whole catalogue of its principles, nothing can be drawn from thence, by legitimate and certain consequence, but what is also true. It is impossible for truth to afford any thing but truth. Every such principle begets a consequence after its own likeness.

2. The next advance of the gospel's excellency is, that it is such a truth as is operative. It does not terminate in notion, or rest in bare unactive speculation, but from the head it shoots forth into the hand, and sets all the faculties of our nature at work. It does not dwell in the mind like furniture, only for ornament, but for use, and the great concernments of life. Most sorts of human knowledge are like the treasures of a covetous man, got with labour and much industry; and being got, they lie locked up, and wholly unemployed: and indeed, the very nature of them abstracts from practice. The knowledge of astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, music, and the like, they may fill the mind, and yet never step forth into one experiment; but the knowledge of the divine truths of Christianity is quick and restless, like an imprisoned flame, which will be sure to force its passage, and to display its brightness.

3. The third and highest degree of its perfection is, that it is not only operative, but also operative to the best of purposes, which is to godliness: it carries on a design for heaven and eternity. Some things are indeed active, but the design of their action is trivial, cheap, and contemptible; so that, in effect, it is no more than a sedulous and a laborious doing of nothing; which kind of actions, should they be arrested with that question, *Cui bono?* the vanity of such performances would quickly appear, that they were but a shooting without any aim, a raising of a bubble, and a pursuing of the wind. Every thing is ennobled by its design; and an action is advanced in its worth, when it drives at an object grand and necessary; John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and whom thou hast sent, Christ Jesus." It serves the two greatest interests in the world, which are, the glory of the Creator, and the salvation of the creature; and this the gospel does by being "the truth which is after godliness."

Which words may admit of a double sense: 1. That the gos-

pel is so called, because it actually produces the effects of godliness in those that embrace and profess it. 2. That it is directly improvable into such consequences and deductions, as have in them a natural fitness, if complied with, to engage the practice of mankind in such a course.

In the former of these senses, the gospel cannot universally sustain this appellation; forasmuch as in many hearts it is no sooner conceived, but it proves abortive; and like the seed falling upon stony ground, it is choked by the thorns of cares and lusts, and other corruptions growing up and hindering it, so that it never brings forth fruit to perfection. Many entertain principles which they defy by their practices, and unlive all that they have believed: so that that which was intended for the cure of sin, by accident becomes its aggravation. Wherefore the latter sense only can take place here; that is, that the gospel, in its nature, is the most apt and proper instrument of holiness in the world, the most naturally productive of holy living and a pious conversation; unless a man prevaricates with the articles of his faith, runs counter to his profession, and acts contradictions.

Now the truth that we have declared to have thus an influence upon godliness, consists in these two things: 1. A right notion of God. 2. A right notion of what concerns the duty of man.

These two are the foundations of all sound and rational piety; and as it is a matter of great moment, so it is also of great difficulty, so to assert and state each of these, both in their just latitude, and yet within their due limits, that one may not intrench upon or evacuate the other.

It highly concerns us so to discourse of God in the matter of religion, that his prerogative of being the first cause of all things, and both the author and finisher of man's salvation, be not infringed by such assertions as of necessity infer the contrary. And yet, on the other side, this prerogative of God is to be defended with such sobriety, as not in the mean time to leave the creature no scope of duty, or to render all exhortations and threatenings, and other helps of action, absurd and superfluous. The difficulty of doing right to both which, appears from this; that those who endeavour to assert one, usually encroach upon the other.

As for instance; some of those who manage the defence of God's prerogative in being the first cause of all things, and sovereign author of our salvation, assert that the creature never advances into action, but by an irresistible predetermination of the faculty to that action; upon the presence of which predetermination the faculty cannot but act, and upon the absence or defect of which, it cannot possibly move or determine itself. And then, over and above this predetermination, they assert a concurrence of God to that action of the power or faculty, perfectly the same with that action. Which assertions, in spite of all qualifications

of them, leave it unapprehensible what place can reasonably be left for addressing exhortations to the will, when it is not at all in its power to proceed to the performance of the thing to which it is exhorted, but solely in the power of him that exhorts.

On the contrary; those who would redeem the will from this inactivity, usually extend the freedom of it to that compass, as to make God a mere stander-by in the great business of the soul's salvation: it being at the courtesy of the will's choice and acceptance, whether all that God does towards the saving of a man shall, in the issue, become effectual or not effectual to that purpose. Such will not allow any thing to be liberty of will, but a perfect equilibrium and indifferency of choice as to good or evil; which for papists to assert, who in this assertion lay the foundation of their pretended merits, is no wonder; but why protestants should be so fond of it, I see no reason. For that this indifferency to good and evil is not of the intrinsic nature and essence of the will's liberty, is clear from this; that then the saints, who are confirmed in the love of God and goodness, so that they cannot sin, or choose that which is evil, could not be said to love God freely; nor the devils to sin freely, for they cannot choose but sin; nor Christ to have done actions of holiness freely, for he could not do otherwise. Besides that the supposition of original sin, and the total depravation of man's nature, renders such a liberty in those that are not renewed by baptism, strangely absurd; for it is an apparent making of a corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit.

But you will say, that this nullifies all exhortations to piety; since a man, in this case, cannot totally come up to the thing he is exhorted to. But to this I answer, that the consequence does not hold: for an exhortation is not frustrate, if a man be but able to come up to it partially, though not entirely and perfectly. As, take a man under the original depravation of nature; though in this condition he cannot avoid all sin, both as to the matter and manner of the action, yet there is no particular sin but he may forbear; though the imperfection and obliquity of the end or motive inducing him so to forbear it, makes the manner of that forbearance not wholly void of fault. A man unregenerate, and unrenewed by grace, may choose whether he will be drunk, fornicate, or swear; but it is not in his power to be acted to these forbearances, out of a love to God, to piety, or virtue; and yet if they proceed not from such a principle, such forbearances are, in the sight of God, but faulty and imperfect.

I am not ignorant, that in giving an account of these matters there is a knot on both sides; and that upon a nice screwing of consequences not easily to be resolved: yet surely it concerns us so to discourse of these points in general, as neither to clip the divine prerogative, nor yet, on the other hand, to tie up the creature so, as to undermine duty by taking away the energy of precepts, threatenings, and exhortations.

To proceed therefore. There are three things that I shall deduce from this description of the gospel's being the truth cording to godliness.

1. That the nature and prime essential design of religion, is to be an instrument of good life, by administering arguments and motives inducing to it.

2. That so much knowledge of truth as is sufficient to engage men's lives in the practice of godliness, serves the necessary ends of religion. For I show, if godliness were the design, it ought also, by consequence, to be the measure of men's knowledge in this particular.

3. That whatsoever doth in itself, or its direct consequences, undermine the motives of a good life, is contrary to, and destructive of Christian religion.

1. That the nature and prime essential design of religion is to be an instrument of good life, by administering arguments and motives inducing to it.

It were to be wished, that to produce reasons and proofs for such a proposition were wholly needless and vain; yet since the capricious and fantastic notions of some men have made it much otherwise, I shall endeavour to clear up the assertion I have laid down by these arguments.

(1.) The first is, because religion designs the service of God, by gaining over to his obedience that which is most excellent in man, and that is, the actions of his life, and continual converse. That these are the most considerable, is clear from hence; because all other actions naturally proceed in a subserviency to these. As the actions of a man's understanding, directing, and of his will commanding, they are all designed for the regulation of his constant behaviour; and that which is the end to which other things are designed, is, as such, more excellent than those things designed to that end.

(2.) The design of religion is man's salvation: but men are not saved as they are more knowing, or assent to more propositions, but as they are more pious than others. Practice is the thing that sanctifies knowledge; and faith without works expires, and becomes a dead thing, a carcase, and consequently noisome to God; who, even to those who know the best things, pronounces no blessing till they do them. Upon this ground it is, that when a man would gather some comfortable assurance of his future estate, he does not seek for evidences from his knowledge, and the boldness of his belief, but from his godliness, and the several instances of a holy life, the only infallible demonstration of a sincere heart; otherwise, it is probable that hell is paved with the heads of the knowing and the wicked, and the catalogue of the damned made up of such as knew their Master's will, and did it not.

(3.) A third argument is from hence, that the discriminating

excellency of Christianity consists not so much in this, that it discovers more sublime truths, or indeed more excellent precepts than philosophy (though it does this also), as that it suggests more efficacious arguments to enforce the performance of those precepts, than any other religion or institution whatsoever. Compare the precepts of Pythagoras, of the Stoics, and of Christian religion; does Christian religion commend piety towards God, and justice to our neighbour? does it arraign vicious affections and corrupt desires? so do they. Wherein then has it the pre-eminence? Why in this; that after they had taught the world their duty, what they were to do, and what not to do, they had no arguments prevalent with the nature of men, above their contrary propensions, to bind them over to such practices.

But Christianity has backed all its precepts with eternal life and eternal death to the performers or neglecters of them; whereas philosophy could do nothing, but by taking in the assistance of fabulous stories, or by telling men that virtue was a sufficient reward to itself; which, upon all experience, has been found an argument infinitely short, and unable to bear up the practices of men, contrary to the solicitations of their opposite impetuous corruptions.

(4.) The fourth and last argument is from this; that notwithstanding the diversity of religions in the world, yet men hereafter will generally be condemned for the same things; that is, for their breaches of morality. Men shall be condemned for being false, lustful, injurious, profane, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and the like. But these are the sins of all nations, and are universally found in the profession of all religions.

It is confessed there shall be an accession to men's guilt, and more or less fuel added to their torments, according as the religion they lived under administered to them clearer or obscurer notions of duty, and more or less pregnant instructions to the exercise of piety; otherwise, men shall not so much be condemned for not believing of riddles and hard sentences, as for not practising of plain duties. For this is that which religion drives at; not to subtilize men's conceptions, but to rectify their manners.

And these are briefly my reasons for the first deduction from the words, namely, that the nature and prime essential design of religion is to be an instrument of good life, by administering arguments and motives inducing to it.

2. A second inference from the gospel's being the truth according to godliness, is this: That so much knowledge of truth as is sufficient to engage men's lives in the practice of godliness, serves the necessary ends of religion; for if godliness be the design, it ought also, by consequence, to be the measure of men's knowledge in this particular. Which consideration, well and duly improved, would discover how needless it is, to say no more,

that ignorant people should be let loose to read and judge of writings that they do not understand. The principles of Christianity, briefly and catechistically taught them, is enough to save their souls; but on the other hand, they may read themselves into such opinions and persuasions, as may at length destroy a government, and fire a whole kingdom: and for this I shall not seek for arguments, after experience.

3. The third and great consequence, from the gospel's being the truth according to godliness, shall be this: That whatsoever does in itself, or its direct consequences, undermine the motives of a good life, is contrary to, and destructive of Christian religion.

Now the doctrines that more immediately concern a good life are reducible to these three heads:

I. Such as concern the justification of a sinner.

II. Such as concern the rule of manners.

III. And such as concern repentance.

All which things are such vital ingredients of religion, that an error in any of them is like poison in a fountain, which must certainly convey death and contagion to every one that shall taste the streams. It will be of some moment therefore to bring the doctrines that lie under these several heads to a particular examination, that so having a distinct view of life and death before us, we may both secure our choice and direct our practice.

I. First of all then, concerning the justification of a sinner. The great business that we have in this world, is to endeavour to be saved, and the means to that is to be justified. This, therefore, is the great mark at which all our actions are to be levelled, the great prize for which we run: and, consequently, if it is not stated and proposed to us upon such terms as shall employ and call forth the utmost attempts of the soul, the nerves of piety are cut, and obedience is overlaid by taking away its necessity. How this may be done, let us take a brief survey.

1. First then, that doctrine that holds that the covenant of grace is not established upon conditions, and that nothing of performance is required on man's part to give him an interest in it, but only to believe that he is justified; this certainly subverts all the motives of a good life. But this is the doctrine of the Antinomians: and the foundation of this they have laid in another wild erroneous assertion, that every believer was actually justified from eternity, and that his faith is only a declaration of this to his conscience, but no ways effective of any alteration of his state or condition. Justified in the sight of God he was before his belief, but his belief, at length, gives him the knowledge of it; and so makes him not more safe, but more confident than he was before.

But certainly this inevitably takes away the necessity of godliness: for it asserts that a sinner and an ungodly person, while

such, may stand justified before God. For the better understanding of which, we must observe, that a man may be said to be a sinner in a double respect: (1.) In respect of the law, as having not continued in all things written in the law, to do them. (2.) In respect of the gospel, as having not believed and repented; which are the terms upon which, through Christ, we are accepted as righteous.

As for the former of these respects, all men are sinners upon a legal score, as not having performed an entire, indefective, legal obedience. But in the latter sense, upon evangelical allowances, a man that believes is not counted to be in a state of sin, though legally he is.

Now the forementioned doctrine allows justification to these sinners also; for if a man is actually and perfectly justified from all eternity, whereas he comes but in some period of his life to believe and repent, does it not invincibly follow, that he was justified before that belief and repentance; and, consequently, while he was under an estate of unbelief and impenitence? which assertion is the very bane of all piety and gospel obedience. It dashes all industry in the ways of holiness, lodges a man's hands in his bosom, and renders a pious life superfluous and precarious?

2. That doctrine that teaches that a man may be accepted with God for the righteousness and merits of other saints, poisons and perverts the nature of justification, so as to render it utterly ineffectual to engage men in a course of godliness. For if there is a treasury of good works and merits deposited in the custody of the church, and to be dispensed by her to whom she pleases, for all the purposes of salvation, a man need not be rich in good works of his own, provided he be rich enough in money to purchase himself a propriety in those of other men. So that it is not a good life, but a good purse that is necessary to the justification of a sinner. Yet upon such wretched doctrines as these is built one of the most externally glorious fabrics that the world has yet seen.

But it will be objected, perhaps, that the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ does equally evacuate all motives to a good life; for if his righteousness, which is infinitely perfect and exact, be imputed to us, what need we produce any of our own? To this I answer, that the reason is not the same. For though the righteousness of Christ be imputed to us, yet it renders not a good life on our part needless, since this is made the very condition of that imputation. That is, if we fill the measures of sincerity in doing the utmost that we are able, Christ's righteousness shall be imputed to us for justification, notwithstanding our failing in many things, which, by reason of the infirmities of our nature, we have not done. Thus, therefore, the imputation of Christ's righteousness is suspended upon a man's own personal righteousness, as its necessary antecedent condition.

But now it is otherwise in the imputation of the merits of the saints to any man, since this cannot proceed upon any such condition of personal obedience on his part. For thus the argument against it will run; either that man does the utmost that he is able, and lives as well as he can, according to the terms of evangelical sincerity, or he does not. If he does, then what need can he have of the righteousness and merits of the saints, who themselves were able to do no more while they lived in the flesh? But if he does not acquit himself in a holy life, and it be admitted that the righteousness of the saints may supply such a defect, so as to render the man accepted before God; is it not as clear as the sun, that by this means the sinner is discharged from pressing after godliness, as necessary to his justification? For it seems he may want it, and yet for all that have his business done to his hand.

How much the great God has been dishonoured, and how many poor souls have been murdered, by such assertions as these, is sad to consider: for they have been abused into a confidence in, and reliance upon, such supports; which, in the invaluable concernments of eternity, have deceived and given them the slip, and let them fall without remedy into the bottomless gulf of endless perdition. God amend or rebuke such pernicious impostors!

II. In the next place, let us consider the doctrines that relate to the rule of life and manners, which is the law of God.

1. First then, that doctrine that exempts all believers from the obligation of the moral law, is directly destructive of all godliness; which doctrine is taught and asserted by the Antinomians, who from thence derive that name, as being opposers to the law. But now, if there be no obligation upon men to the duties of the moral law, how can it be necessary for them to perform any such duties; and, consequently, the command of loving God with all their strength and all their soul, of not worshipping images, of not dishonouring God's name, of obeying parents, of not committing murder, and adultery, and the like, concerns not these persons. But if this be their opinion, it is well that they are not able to escape the force of human laws, as they do the obligation of the divine.

I confess the apostle Paul oftentimes opposes the law to grace, and affirms of believers, that they are not under the law, but under grace. But what does he mean by these expressions? Why his meaning is founded upon a twofold acceptation of the law.

(1.) That it may be taken as a covenant conveying life, upon absolute, entire, indefective obedience, and awarding death to those who fail in the least iota or punctilio.

(2.) It may be taken as a rule of life, and a transcript of the duty of man.

Now it is in the former sense only that believers are not under the law, for if they were, they could not possibly be saved, since all men have sinned, and the law, as a covenant, promises life only upon the terms of such an exact obedience as excludes all sin. But the covenant of grace, under which believers are, promises life upon condition of such obedience as is sincere, though legally imperfect: that is, such a one as is not absolutely exclusive of all sin, but only of the reign, and power, and dominion of sin.

Yet all this does not loose them from the obligation of the law as it is a rule of life, to which they are to conform their actions. The law tells believers what they are to do, and withal obliges them to do it; but what measure of obedience will be accepted of a man, in order to his salvation, that is determined not by this rule, but by the covenant of grace declared in the gospel; which, upon the account of Christ's merits, pardons and dispenses with many deviations from that strict rule, and condemns for none but such as are inconsistent with a state of sincerity.

The forementioned persons, who cashier this obligation of the law also, and admit it for not so much as a rule, resigning themselves up to the sole conduct of their own heart, which they call *the spirit;* these, I say, as needs they must, assert also, that believers cannot sin: for since sin is a trangression of a law, it roundly follows, that those who are obliged to no law can be guilty of no transgression.

But this doctrine is so broadly impious, that it does not undermine a good life, but directly blow it down. And therefore I shall only say this of the abettors of it, that those who can own themselves to be without sin, demonstrate themselves to be without shame.

2. The doctrine which asserts any sin to be, in its nature, venial, that is, such as God cannot in justice punish with damnation, tends to subvert a good life: but the doctrine of the church of Rome asserts this; and lays the foundation of this assertion in a distinction between works done against the law, and works done beside the law. Now they say a thing is done beside the law, when though it is a deviation from the law, yet it is not contrary to the end of the law, which is love to God, but very fairly consistent with it: that is, though a man does such and such things, yet the doing of them ejects not the love of God out of his heart, and so long the design and purpose of the law is served and complied with, notwithstanding all such diminutive transgressions.

But this discourse is very weak and impertinent. For when they say, that some actions destroy not the creature's love to God, and so are only beside the law, as not overthrowing the end of it; they either understand that those actions destroy not that love as to the habit, or the act. If they intend the

former, they speak nothing to the purpose; for an action may be sinful, and yet not drive the principle of habitual love to God out of the soul; forasmuch as a habit is not destroyed by every contrary action: as a man may be habitually holy, and yet sometimes be surprised with the commission of unholy actions; and as to the main, a wise man, though possibly he may have spoken or done some things in his life unwisely. But however, neither the holiness of one, or the wisdom of the other, makes an unholy or unwise action to be upon that account holy or wise.

But if, on the other side, they assert, that these kind of sins interrupt not the actual exercise of the creature's love to God, they will prove that which I believe was never yet proved; namely, that it is possible for a man, in one and the same action, to deviate from the law of God, and yet to exert an act of love towards him; which, indeed, amounts to a plain contradiction: for since to love God is to perform his commands, if we assert that that love is not for the present hindered, or intermitted, by some transgressions of those commands; does it not clearly follow, that a man may perform the command, and yet transgress it at the same time and in the very same action?

But it is not directly my business to insist here upon the absurdity of this doctrine, but to demonstrate the impiety of it, so far as it tends to abate men's endeavour in the pursuit of a stricter course of holiness; which surely it does with a very great and pernicious efficacy. For if men can pervert their judgments so, as to look upon some deviations from the law of God, the great rule of life, as no sins, taking sin strictly and properly, they will proceed to a general undervaluation of the nature of sin; and, keeping a due proportion, if small sins must pass for no sins, the greatest sins must lose many degrees of their greatness. The heart of man will insensibly be wrought upon to make a sport of sin, and to trifle with two the most dreadful things in the world, a strict law and an infinite justice.

But there are no two things that seem to bear so great a resemblance one to another, as the state of the Christian church perverted by the doctors of the church of Rome, and the state of the Jewish church corrupted by the glosses and doctrines of the pharisees. For as the Romists hold fast the distinction of mortal and venial sins; so the pharisees, with the same result, distinguished of the divine precepts and commandments, that some were great, that is, necessary to be observed, and some small, that is, such as did not bind the conscience with so strict an obligation, but that the violation of them might, with a very fair comportment with the divine justice, be dispensed with. And it is with direct allusion to this distinction of theirs, that our Saviour speaks in Matt. v. 19, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men to do so, he shall

be called the least in the kingdom of heaven;" that is, in the Hebrew dialect, he shall have nothing to do there at all: "least" being here not only a term of diminution, but of absolute negation.

The meaning and design of those words was Christ's clearing himself from the common imputation that the scribes and pharisees loaded him with, of being an underminer of the law of Moses. As if he had said, I am so far from having an intent to destroy or untie the binding force of the law, that I enforce a stricter observation of it than those that make this charge against me. For whereas they teach that some of the divine commandments are to be reputed little, and such as men are not bound to the strict observance of; I, on the contrary, affirm that there are no such little commands (as they call them), but that the very least of them obliges so indispensably, that the violation and neglect of it will, without repentance, exclude from heaven, and bind over to damnation.

And no question, but, were he now amongst us, he would rebuke the modern pharisees, and patrons of venial sins, in the same manner: who, by that unhallowed distinction, have lopped off a large proportion of that obliging force that belongs to every divine precept, and so, in effect, have made the law itself faulty and defective: not obliging where men are pleased not to be obliged; and making that to be no duty, which licentious persons are unwilling should be so. Indeed, he that sins against the law is bad enough, but he that makes even the law to sin, that he may discharge himself, is incurable and insufferable.

SERMON VI.

PART II.

ON THE GOSPEL BEING THE TRUTH AFTER GODLINESS.

TITUS I. 1.

The acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.

3. THAT doctrine that asserts, that it is in men's power to supererogate, and to do works of perfection over and above what is required of them by way of precept, tends to the undermining and hinderance of a godly life. Works of evangelical perfection or supererogation are defined, such as a man may without sin not do, but, if he does them, they entitle him to a greater reward. Which assertion carries along with it this visible impiety, that a man is not obliged to do the utmost, in the way of holiness, that he can; for the law is the measure of men's obligation, and no man is obliged to any thing as his duty, but what the law obliges him to: but if it is in his power to do some sublime works of holiness, over and above what the law exacts of him, it clearly follows, that without sin he may omit the doing of them; for where there is no law there is no sin: and here we suppose the obligation of the law not to extend thus far.

Now surely there can be no greater a stop to an active endeavour, than to state the proportions of men's duty less than the proportions of their strength and ability; and to assure them, that they do all that is necessary for them to do, though they do much less than they are able. It seems by this, that God does not call for all their strength and all their souls, but they have great reserves of both left entirely in their own disposal; nay, and those of much greater worth and excellence than what the law demands from them: since the doing of these advances them to a higher perfection, and prepares for them a greater and a brighter crown than all the rest of their obedience.

But if this were so, how shall we make out the sense of those precepts that command us to "strive to enter into the strait gate," and to "press forward to the mark of the prize of the high calling," and "to use our utmost diligence to make our calling and election sure," that "having done all, we may be able to stand;" and the like. Certainly these are expressions that stretch endeavours to the highest, and determine in no less compass than the whole that a man by all the powers and faculties of his soul can perform.

Nor can it avail the persons that we contend with to reply, that God vouchsafes us those assistances of grace, that are able to bear men beyond the lines of mere duty; for the dispensations of grace would, upon these terms, put us into the same condition of perfection, that we are to expect only in a state of glory. Grace indeed extinguishes the reign of sin, but it does not wholly extirpate the inherence of it as to all the remainders. It makes a man that he will not devote and give himself over to the practice of sin, but it does not wholly rescue him from the surprise of many infirmities.

And were not these men fuller of pride than perfection, and more pharisees than Christians, they would acknowledge so much, and let down those gaudy plumes of their high pretences of a double refined sanctity, upon the sight of their black feet and polluted goings. For surely they have not yet convinced the world of the feasibleness and truth of their propositions, by any manifest transcriptions of them upon their lives. But can these doctors style themselves angelical from any thing that they do, whatsoever they are pleased to teach? I cannot see but that a friar or a Jesuit is subject to the same passions and irregular motions that other men are. Nor can I perceive that their lives proceed in such a supernatural strictness, and transcendency of piety, above the rest of the world. They should do well to prove their doctrines of perfection by instance and example; and to demonstrate that a thing may be done, by showing that actually it has been done: but if they cannot, they should first acquit themselves in point of duty, before they flourish it with their supererogations; and think of paying their debts, before they go about to purchase.

Besides, to assert that the perfection, commanded by the law, is less than the perfection that the power of man can raise itself to, seems a high imputation upon God's wisdom and holiness, as he is a legislator; the design of which must needs be, to work up the creature to the highest conformity to himself, that a created nature is capable of. But he that, instead of stretching himself to the latitude of the law, contracts the law to his own measures, will find that God, when he comes to deal with him, will have recourse to his own rule, and not correct a true original by a false copy.

4. That doctrine that places it in the power of any mere mortal man to dispense with the laws of Christ, so as to discharge any man, in any case, from being obliged by them, is highly destructive of holy living. But so does the doctrine of the church of Rome, that vests such a dispensing power in the pope: by which they raise the pretended chair of St. Peter above the throne of Christ himself: for the sovereign power resides not so much in him that makes the law, as in him that is able to do with the law what he pleases when it is made, by either continuing or

suspending the obligation of it. Christ indeed has given laws to his church: but when it is at the pope's pleasure, whether those laws shall oblige or not oblige, I leave it to the judgment of the meanest reason, who in this case must be accounted superior.

The laws of men are dispensable, because the nature of them subjects them to the reason of dispensation; that is, because no human lawgiver is of that wisdom, as to provide against all future inconveniences, in the constitution of laws, but that the observation of them may sometimes run men upon greater mischiefs, than the making of them was designed to prevent; but Christ was of that infinite wisdom and knowledge, as to enact laws of that universal compliance with all the conditions of man, that there can be no new emergent inconvenience unforeseen by him, that should at any time make the obligation of them to cease.

It is possible indeed, that the law may cease to oblige, upon the removal or want of the matter of the obligation. As it is every man's duty to give alms, but if a man has nothing, he can give nothing; and to communicate is a duty, but if the materials of the sacrament, bread and wine, cannot be had, to communicate is impossible, and so no man can be obliged to it; but still, in all this, there is no dispensation with either of these laws; for the impossibility of their performance makes them, to such persons, under such circumstances, cease to be laws. But a law is then properly dispensed with, when it is capable of being obeyed, and the person capable of yielding such obedience to it is yet, by an intervenient power, discharged from his obligation to obey: the former case is like fire's not burning, when it has no fuel, or matter, to fasten or prey upon; the latter is like the fire's not burning the three children in the furnace, when both the fire was in full force, and also a proper combustible subject offered to it; but, by the interposal of a divine power, it was hindered from exerting that burning quality upon that subject. So here, the law is in full force, and the person under it in a capacity to do the thing commanded by it; but the pope tells him, that he shall not be obliged to it, he will dispense with him, and so the labour of obeying is saved.

But since bold encroachments seldom venture themselves without pretences, it concerns us to see what reason the pope assigns for his exercising such a power over the laws of Christ. Why, his spiritual janizaries, the schoolmen and casuists, tell us, that where the observation of any command is *impeditiva majoris boni*, a stop and hinderance of a greater good than the non-observance of it would occasion, there the pope has power to dispense with the observation of that command, and to discharge men from it.

As for instance: a man has bound himself with a lawful vow or oath, and accordingly proceeds to the execution of it; but the priest finds, that the greatness of their church would be con-

siderably advantaged by this person's not observing his vow or oath, and accordingly persuades him to break it; but the man's conscience is solicitous and tender, and asks who shall warrant him in the breach of a lawful oath: hereupon, the pope says that he will; and though the law of God and nature ties a man to the keeping of his oath, yet because the not keeping of it will minister to a greater good, namely, the advantage of the church, this is a sufficient reason for him to dispense with his oath: for answer to which, I would inquire, whether the command of keeping oaths and vows is not clear and express; and whether there can be any greater good, than to obey an express command of God. I demand also, supposing that the advancement of their church be indeed a greater good, yet, whether the intending of such a good can legitimate an action in its nature sinful? and whether the breach of a clear command be not such a one? When these questions receive a full and a satisfactory resolution, then may the conscience acquiesce in the pope's dispensation; but till then, it is safer to obey God in the precept, than man in the interpretation of it.

And now, who is there that deserves the name of a Christian, whose heart does not rise against such horrid and impious usurpations upon the prerogative of Christ? such gross and open methods of promoting the course of sin? If a command of Christ thwart that which the pope, in the behalf of his own interest, will judge a greater good, the command must stand back, and his dispensation take place. All such bands upon the conscience are like the withes or the cords upon Samson, they fly asunder like flax burnt with fire; they are of no force or efficacy at all. For as it is in the pope's power to dispense with a command, so it is also solely in his power to judge of the reason upon which he is to dispense with it: and we know that he is seldom the poorer for such dispensations.

The truth is, he exposes the precepts of Christ to sale, and he that will bid most for the breach of a command shall carry it; which is such an intrenching upon all the offices of Christ, such an impudent defiance of that supremacy of which he pretends to be the vicar and substitute, that it is apparent that St. Peter's pretended successor sells Christ's power, as much as ever Judas did his person. Here is the making merchandise of religion, and with that of souls: here is the groundwork of indulgences, the quick market for pardons, by which the gospel, from the law of liberty, is turned into the instrument of license; and the sure asylum for such as would live sinners, and yet die saints.

And thus much for the doctrines that tend to the undermining of a pious life, by perverting the great rule of living, the law of Christ. I come now to

III. The third sort, which are those that relate to *repentance*.

This follows in order of nature, for after a law is broken, there is no recovery but by repentance; so that the depravation of the nature of this, is a sin against our last remedy; and he that, having transgressed the divine law, abuses his conscience with false rules of repentance, does like a man that first by his intemperance brings himself into a disease, and then puts poison into his physic.

Now the doctrine about repentance may be perverted in a double respect: 1. In respect of the time of it. 2. In respect of the measure.

1. And first, for the doctrine that states the time of repentance destructively to a pious life. And for this, it cannot but be very grievous and offensive to persons possessed with a real piety and sense of religion, to consider the assertions and positions of the Romish casuists touching this particular. Their answer to this question, 'When shall a sinner repent?' is, in general, 'At any time whatsoever.' Which indefinite assertion has by some been drawn out into particular determinate periods of time. As some affirm, that it is a man's duty to act repentance on the grand holidays, as Christmas, Whitsuntide, but especially at Easter. But others except against this as too severe, and say, that since God has not determined the time of repentance, we are to presume that the church also is so favourable as leave it undetermined too: and, therefore, some blush not to state the matter thus: That the time in which a sinner is bound to repent, or to have contrition for his sins, is the article of imminent death, whether natural or violent. In a word, they say a man is bound to repent of his sins *once;* but when that *once* shall be, he may determine as he shall think fit.

Before I come to examine these profane assertions, I shall carefully premise this observation; that in this whole matter, we are by no means to confound the duty of repentance with the success or issue of repentance. For although it is not to be denied, that a man, having sinned, and afterwards defers his repentance for a long time, may yet, by the grace of God, repent savingly and effectually at last; yet this makes nothing for the proving that it was not that man's duty to have repented immediately upon the commission of his sin; and that every minute of such delay was not sinful. No man is to make the event of what he has done, the measure of what he ought to do. It is possible that a sinner may be converted, and turned to God, in the last year, or month, or perhaps day of his life; but, notwithstanding this, he sinned in not being converted to God before.

This premised by way of answer to the Romish casuists, I reply, That that sentence of the church, "At what time soever a sinner repenteth him of his sins, God will blot out his iniquities from before him," speaks only of the consequent event and success of a true repentance, but determines nothing antece-

dently of the time in which that repentance is to begin; which, in opposition to the foregoing blasphemies, we are undoubtedly to hold to be the very next instant after the commission of the sin: then is the time in which it is the duty of a sinner to repent; from that very moment there is an obligation upon him to recover himself by a hearty contrition and humiliation; and that I prove by this argument: either a man is bound immediately to repent after he has sinned, or the impenitence remaining upon him in that subsequent portion of time is no sin; and if so, then in case he should die in that time, he could not be chargeable before God for that impenitence. Chargeable, indeed, he would be for the sin he had committed; but for not repenting of that sin no charge could lie upon him. But this is an assertion of such barefaced intolerable impiety, so directly contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel, that it can need no confutation.

However, it is worth considering, to see upon what ground our adversaries have built their assertion. And it is briefly this, that God obliges a sinner to repentance, not properly as to a duty, but as to a punishment; and being so, from the strength of this maxim, that nobody is bound in conscience to undergo a punishment till he is condemned; and adding withal, that the day of danger, or approaching death, seems to be this arraignment and condemnation of a sinner; then they conclude, that, for his own security, it is incumbent upon him to submit to the penalty of repentance.

But to this I answer, first, that this supposition, that repentance is properly a punishment, is, in a great measure, false. For repentance is properly the amendment of a man's life, and a passing from a state of sin to a state of holiness; but this is not a punishment, but a perfection and a privilege. It is indeed accompanied with afflictive actions, such as sorrow and remorse for past sins; but this is only by accident; because a man cannot recover himself to newness of life, without such sorrowful reflections upon what is past; otherwise, if amendment of life could be compassed without them, we should find that sorrow for sin was not the thing directly and chiefly intended in the precept of repentance.

It is clear therefore, that repentance is not properly a punishment; but whether it were so or no, that which was argued before from the nature of it, and the sinfulness of impenitence, sufficiently evinces that the practice of it is to be immediate. No man can, without sin, defer it till the morrow, any more than to the year after, or to that, than to his death. For the words being indefinite, respect not one time more than another, and therefore the determination of the time must be fetched from the nature of the duty commanded in these words; which, since it determines for the present, it ought presently to be put in practice.

Add to this, that every moment passing without repentance, adds to the guilt and strength of sin unrepented of; which lies not idle or unactive, but fixes its possession deeper and deeper; the mind, by reflecting upon it with relish and complacency, grows into more intimate unions with it; so that, in effect, by the internal actions and approbations of the will, it is repeated and re-acted without any external commission. There is nothing more absolutely destructive of the very designs of religion, than to stop a sinner in his return to God, by persuading his corrupt heart, that he may prorogue that return with safety, and without any prejudice to his eternal concernments. Upon the best issue of things, it amounts to an exhortation to him to reap the pleasures of sin as long as he can; and then, at last, that he may not also reap the fruits of sin, to submit to repentance as a less evil, but not to choose it as a good. But whether he that has these notions of repentance is ever like to arrive to the truth of repentance, he alone knows, who knows whether he will give such a one another heart or no. The doctrine therefore of a deferred repentance is a mischievous and a devilish doctrine, and like to bring those that trust in it to the devil.

2. The next pernicious error about repentance relates to the measure of it. And here we will suppose the Romish casuists to recede from the former error, and to be fully orthodox as to the time of repentance, and to enjoin it immediately. But then, what is the repentance that they enjoin? Is it such a one as changes the life and renews the heart? Such a one as breaks the power and dominion of sin, and works an alteration in all the faculties and inclinations of the soul? No; this is too troublesome a task: they have a much shorter way: for, unless they can put off their sins as easily as a man does his cloak, they had rather have them stay on. And therefore, placing the nature of repentance only in sorrow for sin, they distinguish this sorrow into two sorts: the first is contrition, which is a sorrow for sin conceived from the apprehension of its natural filth and contrariety to the pure nature of God; the other is attrition, which is any sorrow or remorse of the mind for sin conceived from the apprehension of the danger and misery like to be consequent upon it.

Now, though they enjoin the former, and recommend it, yet not as absolutely necessary to the forgiveness of sins: for they hold, that a man dying with attrition, that is a less sorrow, and commenced upon lower motives than the love of God, if attended with confession to the priest, and absolution from him, shall undoubtedly be saved. An assertion of such high venom and malignity, that it even opens the floodgates to all wickedness, and confirms men in a resolved pursuit of their sin, by securing them a passport to heaven and happiness upon those easy terms, that it is scarce possible for the vilest of sinners but they must come up to.

For imagine a man, after threescore years' debauchery, laid at length upon his death-bed, without any hope of recovery, and then for the priest to ask him whether he is not troubled for his sins, and whether he wishes not, that he had not committed those things, that are like to pay him home with the wages of eternal death; the man, no doubt, under his present weariness of appetite and decay of body, cannot be so much a stock, and unconcerned for himself, but that he can wish these things undone, of which he tastes no present pleasure, and for which he fears a future vengeance. Now if this, joined with their customary confession, shall be accounted by the priest a sufficient ground upon which to absolve him, and, upon his absolution, to warrant his salvation, I cannot see but that, upon this way of procedure, it is more difficult for a man to be damned than to be saved. For this whole act of attrition is not properly the sinner's being troubled that he has sinned, but that he is like to be damned for his sin; which, for a man not to be troubled at, that carries human nature and sense about him, is impossible.

This therefore is short of that which is itself short of repentance; that is, it is short of real sorrow for sin: and sorrow for sin (whatsoever some may imagine) is not repentance. It is indeed a part, or rather an adjunct of it, there being no true repentance without sorrow. But repentance is properly a man's engaging in a new course of life; not a weeping for sins past, but a vigorous resistance and mortification of sin for the future. The contrary opinion has undoubtedly deceived many, and betrayed them into that place, where they are repenting too late of the errors of their former repentance. Let no man account himself to have repented, who has not changed his life. And, as the apostle says of circumcision and uncircumcision, so say I here, that neither mourning for sin, or confession of it, avail any thing, but "a new creature." And truly, he that will hope for life upon other terms, must do it by a new gospel.

And thus I have traversed those pestilential doctrines, that, like worms, lie gnawing at the root of all godliness; doctrines that only purvey for licentiousness. And I dare avouch, that, if these carry in them the true sense of Christian religion, a man may, with full and perfect compliance with the rules of Christianity, make as plentiful a provision for the gratification of his corrupt desires, as if he were a mere atheist or epicure. And therefore, I wonder not that many pass from our church to the church of Rome: for being sick in conscience, and yet impatient to undergo the rigours of a thorough cure, they are willing to make up all with a skinning plaster, and to relieve their minds upon as easy terms as they can. And of this they cannot fail in the church of Rome, which has contrived her doctrine to a perfect agreement with all interests and dispositions; so that, to frame and bend all discourses of divinity to the humours and

corruptions of men, is with them religion, as with us it is, for the most part, accounted prudence.

I have now finished the third and last conclusion drawn from the words; namely, That whatsoever does in itself, or its direct consequences, undermine the motives of a good life, is contrary to and destructive of Christian religion.

The improvement of all that has been delivered shall lie in these two things:

1. To convince us how highly it concerns all, but especially the most knowing, to try the doctrines that they believe, and to let inquiry usher in faith. It is noted of the Bereans, Acts xvii. 11, as a sign of a generous and noble spirit, that they would search and sift the nature of the things that were delivered to them; for it is sifting that separates the flour from the bran, the precious from the vile. Error is a thing that does not always discover itself to the first view; it is often fair as well as deceitful; and therefore that understanding that will sell its assent to first appearances is in danger of the snare, and to mistake an imposture for an oracle. An error may look speciously in a principle, which will betray ugliness enough in the consequences. It may be honey in the mouth, and wormwood in the belly; delicious to the first apprehensions, but found destructive upon after inquiry and experiment.

He that embraces and believes a truth, if he does it without trial, owes the rightness of his judgment, not to understanding, but chance. But truth is too great a prize to be the reward of laziness. God never made it but for the trophy of a laborious and a searching intellect. No man can rationally build upon an implicit faith, that is, upon another's knowledge, but he that has given his name to that church which allows a man to be saved by other men's righteousness. We are commanded to "try all things;" and therefore, certainly, that thing that is worth all the rest. In a word, since truth is the way to happiness, and since there is no promise of finding, but to him that seeks; he that will not be at the trouble to seek out the way, does not deserve to attain the end.

2. As what has been delivered convinces us of the necessity of trying all doctrines; so it suggests also the sure marks by which we may try them.

(1.) As first negatively; it is not the pleasingness or suitableness of a doctrine to our tempers or interests that can vouch it to be true. Men oftentimes believe things to be so, because they would have them so; and the judgment is strangely induced to yield its assent to any assertion that shall gratify the affections. But my profit or my pleasure are very incompetent guides of my conscience; very unfit casuists to resolve questions. Truth is a thing that usually carries with it too great a severity to correspond with our pleasures. It lies in the rough paths of duty and

difficulty, things wonderfully opposite to the delights of pleasure and sensuality, and made to please not in themselves, but in their effects and consequences. No man thinks a thing too pleasant or too profitable; but many will hereafter find that some things are too true.

(2.) The commonness, and the general or long reception of a doctrine, is not a sufficient argument of the truth of it. This relies upon the former consideration, that the suitableness of any doctrine does not evince it to be true; but it is certain that doctrines are oftentimes generally received because they are suitable, and serve an interest. Witness most of those that are held in the church of Rome; they were introduced by fraud, and continued by force: for there is something of pleasure or profit in the bottom of almost every one of them.

But falsity does not cease to be falsity, by having the good fortune to be generally believed a truth; any more than a plague ceases to be a plague, by spreading itself over all places. It is indeed the more dangerous and formidable, and so may be more hardly conquered, but for the very same cause it is to be the more earnestly opposed.

Neither does long continuance sufficiently commend a doctrine; for it is possible that it may be no more than agedness of error; and no grey hairs can make that venerable. The impostures of Mahomet have lasted now a thousand years; and should they last a thousand more, they would be as false as they were at their first beginning. Age alters the circumstance, but not the nature of things.

(3.) It is not the godliness or virtue of the preacher, or asserter of any doctrine, that is a sure mark of the truth of it; for godliness makes no man infallible. It is possible that a man may think a principle true or pious, which, in its consequences, may be false or impious; because he has not force of reason enough to discern all the conclusions into which a proposition may be improved.

It is the infelicity of truth, and the great hinderance of both science and religion, that the greatness or goodness of some persons should imprint the same authority upon their words. And error has never such an advantage to prevail and insinuate, as when it is propagated by a person of reputation for wisdom or piety. It has been observed, that most heretics have been such; by virtue whereof they have conveyed their poison to the world successfully. And our own schismatics took the same course; for had they not gained such an opinion for sanctity with the rout, they could not have countenanced and christened all those black villanies that were acted in the late rebellion.

But a doctrine is to be tried by its consequences; as a way is to be chosen or shunned, according as the end is to which it leads. It concerns every man to preserve his reason from fallacy and

deception; and it makes no alteration of his case, that he was deceived by an authentic hand, any more than it is a comfort to a man dying by an infection, that he caught it of a great and honourable person.

But if a doctrine naturally tends to promote the fear of God in men's hearts, to engage them in the prosecution of virtuous courses, to persuade them to be sober, pious, temperate, charitable, and the like; it carries with it the mark and impress of the great eternal truth; and so is no more capable of being a lie, than a lie is capable of being good; or than God, the fountain of truth and goodness, is capable of being contrary to himself.

SERMON VII.

PART I.

ON THE MANNER OF ADMINISTERING REPROOF.

Proverbs xxix. 5.

A man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet.

He that shall set himself to fight against a custom, will find that the match is not equal; and that by speaking against a generally received practice, he only treads the dry paths of duty, without any reward or recompence, but only to be slighted for his pains. But since neither custom nor credit must authorize a vice so far, as to set it out of the preacher's reach; surely an ill practice may be very safely and discreetly reprehended, while in the mean time persons are spared.

That which the text here offers for the subject of this discourse, is flattery; a thing condemned by the mouth of one who could very well judge, as being a king, and therefore experimentally acquainted with the ways and arts of flatterers: a sort of cattle that usually herd in the courts of princes and the houses of great persons.

The words of the text are so plain, that they can need no explication, and therefore I shall immediately fall upon the prosecution of the matter contained in them; which I shall manage under these three general heads:

I. I shall show what flattery is, and wherein it does consist.

II. I shall show the grounds and occasions of it on his part that is flattered.

III. I shall show the ends and designs of it on his part that flatters.

I. And for the first of these, *what flattery is.* It surely must be a very difficult thing to bring it under any certain description, the very nature and property of it being to put on all forms and shapes, according to the exigence of the occasion: as it is reported of a creature called a polypus, that it still assumes the exact colour of that thing to which it cleaves. And therefore he that would paint flattery, must draw a picture of all colours, and frame a universal face, indifferent to any particular aspect whatsoever. But though we cannot reach all the varieties of it, we may yet endeavour to give some account of those general ways in which it does exercise and show itself.

1. The first is the concealing or dissembling of the defects or vices of any person. Indeed to publish a man's defects to others is malice, but to declare them to himself is friendship and sincerity: for it is to awake him out of his sleep when his house is afire, and to tell him that he is under a distemper that may prove mortal, if not prevented by timely applications. But flattery is like that devil mentioned in the gospel, that is both blind and dumb; it will pretend not to see faults, and if it does, it will be sure not to reprove them; a temper of all others the most base, cruel, and unchristian: for it declares a man unconcerned in the misery and calamity of his brother, such a one as will not put himself to the expense of a word, to recover a perishing soul from the mouth of ruin and damnation. It shows him to be void of compassion, the bond of converse and all society.

It is, indeed, in the estimation of the world, accounted a piece of prudence, to let things go as they will, without interposing to interrupt or alter their course; and no question but if a man, according to our modern politics, makes himself the sole centre of all his actions, and thinks upon nothing but the improving and securing his private interest, it is the safest and most prudential course to stand still and say nothing, though he sees never so many destroying themselves round about him. But had the world heretofore acted by those principles that pass for prudence now-a-days, perhaps it would not have stood so long as it has; for had no man espoused the cause of the public, nor thought himself at all obliged, upon the common accounts of humanity, to contribute to the good and advantage of others, men could never have united or embodied; or being once embodied, and gathered into corporations, they must presently again have been scattered and dissolved; there being (upon supposition of that temper that we have been discoursing of) no common cement to bind and hold them together.

Now this is the only ground upon which the flatterer's silence can be accounted prudence; but unless to be base is to be prudent, I suppose it will have another esteem with those who are the most competent judges of such things. It is indeed a pest and a disease, and so to be looked upon and detested by those minds that have the least tincture of virtue and generosity. It breeds only in narrow, paltry, self-serving spirits, that lie upon the catch, and make this their whole design, to enjoy the world, and to live to themselves.

But now, as to be silent of men's defects and vices is a piece of flattery, and flattery a degenerous and unworthy thing; yet that all people may not promiscuously think themselves called upon to reprove and declare against whatsoever they see amiss in others, and so mistake that for charity and duty, which is indeed nothing else but sauciness and impertinence, it will be convenient to show,

1st. Who they are that are concerned to speak in this case.

2dly. The manner how they are to speak.

And first for the persons: I conceive they may be brought under these three sorts:

(1.) First such as are entrusted with the government of others. All government makes the actions and behaviour of him that is governed in some sense the actions and behaviour of him that governs; and consequently a governor is as really obliged to observe and regulate what is done by those that are under him, as what he does himself. And therefore as no man is to flatter himself, so neither is such a one to flatter others. No man is to be abused into a destructive persuasion, that his vices are virtues, and his faults perfections; which without an impartial discovery, will certainly follow, from that opinion that self-love begets in every man of his own actions, though never so ugly and irregular. He that says nothing of the miscarriages of a person under his government betrays a trust, and forgets that as every father is a governor, so every governor ought, in some respect, to be a father: and surely no father will suffer a son to perish, only for want of telling him that he is like to perish; if he does, God will require his blood at his hands, which will be but a sad reckoning, where the relation shall redouble the murder.

(2.) The second sort of persons, to whom it belongs to tax and take notice of miscarriages, are those who are entrusted with the guidance and direction of others; such as are persons set apart to the work of the ministry. It may possibly be looked upon as a piece of presumption to say, that they are to guide or to direct, who of all men are accounted the most ignorant and impertinent; yet such is their unhappiness, that the sins of those that think themselves much wiser, if not reproved and testified against by them, will be charged by God upon their score. That preacher that shuts his eyes and his mouth where he sees a bold and a reigning vice, prevaricates with his profession, and deserves to be removed from it by some remarkable judgment from Heaven, for being too wise to discharge his duty.

He is silent, it seems, for fear of interrupting a great sinner's repose. The galled conscience must not be touched, for fear the beast should kick and do him a shrewd turn. And therefore there must not be a word cast out, that may so much as border upon a reprehension, or but hint his sin to his suspicion; for if that takes fire, so as to make him worry and at length ruin the preacher, all the pity he shall find for being faithful so much to his own disadvantage, shall be to be upbraided for want of experience, and for not knowing men. However this and a much sharper calamity cannot take off the obligation that Christ and Christianity has laid upon every preacher of the word. And it is to be feared, that God may, some time or other, silence those who have in this manner first silenced themselves.

(3.) The third sort of persons to whom this duty belongs are those that profess friendship. Every man is to challenge this as a debt from his friend, to be told impartially of his faults; and whosoever forbears to do it, fails in the highest office of kindness. For to what purpose does a man take another into that intimacy as to make him in a manner his second conscience, if he will not be bold and impartial, and do the office of conscience, by excusing or accusing, according as he has done well or ill? Two things are required in him that shall undertake to reprove another; a confidence in, and a kindness to the person whom he reproves: both which qualifications are eminently to be found in every real friend. For who should a man confide in, if not in himself? and who should he be kind to, if not to himself? and is it not a saying as true as it is common, that every friend is another self?

But is it possible that that man should truly love me, that leaves me unguarded and unassisted, when the weakness and inadvertency of my own mind would expose me, with all my indecencies and imperfections, to the observation and derision of the world? No; it is the nature of love to "cover a multitude of sins;" which are by no way so effectually concealed and covered from the eyes of others, as by being faithfully discovered and laid open to him who commits them.

It puts him upon his defence, and upon all the arts of securing himself, by watching and criticising upon his own behaviour: it arms him with caution and recollection, and so frees him from the greatest evil in the world, which is confidence in the midst of folly: a quality that destroys wheresoever it abides; that unfits a man for conversation, deprives him of all respect, and, in a word, is the only thing that can make his enemies formidable, and, in all their attempts against him, successful.

And thus I have shown who the persons are, to whom it belongs to discover and to reprove faults. But since, though the work is fitted to the person, there may still be a fault in the manner, we shall, in the next place, see how these reprehensions are to be managed: concerning which I shall set down these rules:

(1.) First, let the reproof (if possible) be given in secret; for the design of it is not to blazon the crime, but to amend the person. Let it not be before malicious witnesses, such as shall more enjoy the man's shame, than hate his vice. The publication of a miscarriage, instead of reforming the offender, may possibly make him desperate or impudent; either to despond under the burden of his infamy, or to harden his forehead like a flint, and resolve to outface and outbrave it; neither of which are like to conduce any thing to the purposes of virtue, or to promote the person's recovery.

Shame indeed is a notable instrument to deter a man from vicious and lewd practices; but then it is not shame as it is actually endured, but as it is yet feared; for the endurance of it

puts an end to the fear; and if the man is of a bold and a daring temper, is like to make him ten times more a wretch and a villain than he was before: for now he thinks he has felt the worst of his crime, and so lies under no check, as to its further progress.

But such is partly the malice, partly the unskilfulness of most persons, in their taxing the faults of others, that the man that is most concerned in the report, perhaps comes to hear of it last; it being first communicated to another, and so, through many hands, is at length conveyed to him; or peradventure, it is at the very first proclaimed upon the house-top; so that the man, instead of being gradually reduced, is at once blown up and undone, and this is all the charity and discretion of some reprovers.

But the method prescribed by Christ is very different. Has thy brother offended thee? "first tell him his fault between him and thee;" and if that prevail not, then take unto thee a witness; but if neither this will do any thing, then tell it him before two or three witnesses; and at last, upon contempt of all these, then bring it to the church. All which excellent proceeding consists of so many steps of prudence and humanity; of tenderness to our brother's reputation, as well as to his soul; and of his comforts in this world, as well as of his salvation in the next: a course worthy the imitation of all, but especially those who are to study the great wisdom of winning souls.

The vices of most natures have in them this property of the dirt, that the sight of the sun hardens, but never dissolves them. When the crime is made public, the criminal thinks it not worth while to retreat. His ignominy is now in the mouths and memory of all men, and so not to be cancelled, or brought into oblivion by any after practices of virtue, or regularity of living.

The end of every reproof is remedy; but to shame a man is revenge; and such a one as the bitterest adversary in the world cannot act a sharper, or a more remorseless: and therefore the church of Rome, which practises and requires confession of sins to the priest, thinks no penalty too severe to be inflicted upon that confessor that should disclose any thing revealed to him in confession. A practice most wise and charitable; and though used by them perhaps upon grounds of policy, yet to be enforced in the like instances upon the highest accounts of religion.

For it is a piece of inhuman barbarity, to afflict a man but in order to his consequent good; and I have shown, that the publication of a man's shame, that might otherwise be concealed, can contribute nothing to the making of him better. It may sink his spirit, or exasperate his vice; but any other effect upon him, it can have none. A sore is never to be ripped up, but in order to its cure.

(2.) Let a reproof be managed with due respect to, and distinction of the condition of the person that is to be reproved.

He that at any time comes under the unhappy necessity of reprehending his superior, ought so to behave himself, that he may appear to acknowledge him his superior no less in the reproof, than in the most solemn acts of reverence and submission; for religion teaches no man to be rude or uncivil, nor takes away the difference of persons, and the inequality of states and conditions; but commands a proportion of respect suitable to all: and he that reproves a prince or a great person, in the same manner that he would a peasant, or his equal and companion, shows that he is acted rather by the spirit of a Scotch presbytery, than of Christ. But such perhaps will defend themselves with the example of the prophet Elijah reviling Ahab and Jezebel, and so baptizing the intemperance of their tongues with the name of zeal, bear themselves for persons of an heroic spirit, comparable to the old prophets. But persons that pretend this, ought to satisfy the world, that they act by the same extraordinary commission from heaven that Elijah did, and withal to do the miracles that Elijah did, for the proving of that commission; otherwise it will not be sufficient for them, that they show wonders of incivility and ill behaviour.

All persons called to the ministry, are undoubtedly commissioned by Christ to bear witness to the truth, by testifying against the enormities of the greatest, as well as of the meanest sinners; but no man's particular personal indiscretion, is any part of his commission. It is possible, indeed, that it may, nay, very certain that it will make the execution of it very useless and ineffectual to most of the great purposes to which Christ designed it; for truth unseasonably and unmannerly proposed, comes with a disadvantage, and is in danger to miscarry through the unskilfulness of the proposer: and, as we say of some commentators and interpreters of scripture, that the text had been clearer, had they not expounded, or indeed, rather exposed it; so it is like that some persons had not been so vicious and lewd, to the degree of incorrigible, had not their vice and lewdness been indiscreetly reproved; for that has made them bid defiance to virtue, and turn their backs upon the reproof; imputing (by an unjust indeed, but yet by a usual inference) the faults of the person upon the office and the religion; in which case the reprover shall, before God, share the offender's guilt; for that finding him sinful, he made him obstinate and impenitent; and so confirmed the beginnings of sin into a resolved, settled impiety.

I question not, but it had been very lawful for Abraham to have reproved his father's idolatry, and to have declared and represented the unreasonableness of such a worship to him. But yet while he was doing so, I cannot believe that he was in the least discharged from the eternal obligation of the law of nature, exacting a due honour to be paid to parents: for a true doctrine could never have excused an undutiful behaviour.

With what humility, reverence, and distance did Daniel reprove Belshazzar! Though a most impious insulting heathen, and one that had but newly, in a drunken revel, even spit in the face of the God of heaven, by a profanation of the sacred vessels of the temple amongst his unhallowed parasites and concubines; yet he did not fly in his face, or call him profane or sacrilegious prince, and tell him that divine vengeance would pay him home for his insolence and unthankfulness to God. No; Daniel did not speak as some, that now-a-days pretend to interpret, utter themselves to princes. But after he had recounted the signal mercies and judgments of God upon his father Nebuchadnezzar, all the reproof he gives him runs in these gentle and sober words, ch. v. 22, "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this." For undoubtedly, had he been sharp and peremptory, Belshazzar, a prince of that haughty and arrogant spirit, would never have sent him out of his presence clothed with scarlet, and with a gold chain about his neck. No; it is like he had been loaded with another kind of chain, and, perhaps, worn a scarlet dyed with his own blood. But prudence and submission made his reproof acceptable and his person honourable.

Great ones, whose state and power makes their will absolute and formidable, must, for the most part, be pleased before they can be convinced; and therefore must be brought to love before they will obey the truth. Upon which account it is infinitely vain to cast the issue and success of persuasion upon the sole force of truth or virtue addressing itself to the mind, with all its severities bare and unqualified by a winning behaviour in him that is to persuade. He that presumes upon the mere efficacy of truth, forgets that men have affections to be caressed, as well as understandings to be informed; which is the reason that a reprehension can never be grateful to persons of high place, but as it comes disguised with ceremony, and attended with all the expressions and demonstrations of honour and due respect: all which will be found little enough to keep them from thinking themselves affronted, while they are only faithfully admonished; and from throwing back an unpleasing truth in the teeth of him that brings it.

What men's pride and ill-nature may carry them to, is not in the preacher's power to remedy or prevent; only it concerns him, that the reproof which men's sins have made necessary, should not, by any failure of duty on his part, be made ineffectual. God has not made it a virtue in any man to have no respect of persons: and therefore let him that shall call upon princes and Cæsars to give God his due, beware that he do it with that homage as not to bereave Cæsar of his due; remembering, that if he that reproves is God's ambassador, yet he that is reproved is God's vicegerent; and that there is nothing in the

world that more highly deserves reproof, than a pragmatical and absurd reprover.

(3.) Let him that reproves a vice, as much as is possible, do it with words of meekness and commiseration. Let the reprehension come not as a dart shot at the offender's person, but at his crime. Let a man reprehend so, that it may appear that he wishes that he had no cause to reprehend. Let him behave himself in the sentence that he passes, as we may imagine a judge would behave himself, if he were to condemn his own son, brought as a criminal before him; that is, with the greatest reluctancy and trouble of mind imaginable, that he should be brought under the necessity of such a cruel accident, as to be forced to speak words of death to him, whose life he tenders more passionately than his own.

Now this being the temper and disposition that is required in a reprover, it easily appears, that nothing can be more deformed and uncharitable than scoffs and bitter sarcasms thrown at a poor guilty person; than to insult over his calamity, and to seem, as it were, to taste and relish his distress. A jeering reprover is like a jeering judge, than which there cannot be imagined, either in nature or manners, a thing more odious and intolerable. And therefore the Roman orator, discoursing of scoptical urbanity, or jesting, how far it was allowable in speeches and pleadings, lays down an excellent rule, fit to be owned by the most Christian charity, that two things were by no means to be made the subject of jest; namely, great crimes, and great miseries; for if these be made the matter of our mirth, what can be the argument of our sorrow? There is something in them at which nature shrinks and is aggrieved; so that it beholds them with horror and uneasiness: and nothing but a very ill mind, improved by a very ill custom, can frame itself to pleasant apprehensions upon such occasions; for that any man should be merry, because another has offended God or undone himself, is certainly a thing very unnatural.

But then further; as reproofs are not to be managed with bitter and scurrilous reflections upon the offender, so neither is the offence itself to be aggravated by higher and blacker expressions than the nature of the thing or the necessity of the occasion requires. He that is to reprove, is to remember, that his business is not to declaim and show his parts, but to work a cure. And some actions are so confessedly lewd, that but to hint them to the offender, is sufficient to cover him with shame and sad remembrances, without a morose and particular insisting upon the description of their vileness; which being to tell the guilty person no more than what he knew before, cannot properly serve to inform, but only to upbraid and afflict him; which is none of the works of charity, as every reprehension ought to be.

David was not to be informed of the enormity of the sins of

murder and adultery, and to have long harangues made before him, to aggravate and set forth their filthiness; and therefore, when the prophet Nathan was to bring him a reproof from heaven, and to call him to repentance, we see with what insinuations and arts of gentleness he does it: he represents the injustice and unreasonableness of what he had done in a parallel case, leaving him to make the application; by which, having brought him to the confession of his sin, he does not presently fill his ears with tragical exclamations about the impiety and grossness of it, both in respect of the person that committed it, and the persons upon whom it was committed; a work fitter for a schoolmaster than a prophet; but he answers his confession with a declaration of pardon, seconded only with a gentle item, or admonition; "The Lord has done away thy sin; thou shalt not die: howbeit, by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." Nothing could have been spoken more gently, and yet more forcibly, to melt him down into a penitential sorrow for, and an abhorrence of those two foul deviations from the law of God. But there is a sort of men in the world, pretending to a degree of purity and acquaintance with the mind of God above other mortals, that upon such an opportunity would have called up all their spleen and poison, and have reviled him at least two hours by the clock; and could no more have refrained doing so, than they could have held their breath so long.

Before I pass from this rule of managing reproofs with words of meekness, candour, and compassion; I cannot but think this also necessary to be added, that they are to be managed without superciliousness, and a certain spiritual arrogance, by which the reprover looks upon the guilty person with disdain, in comparison of that higher measure of holiness and perfection, that upon this account he presumes to be in himself. But this is for pride to reprehend other vices, which perhaps, in the sight of God, carry a much less guilt.

He that has a criminal and a vicious person under his reproof, should speak as one that thankfully ascribes it to God's mere grace, that he is not as bad himself, having the same nature, and the same natural corruptions, to betray him to all the evil and villany that can be, if God should but desert and leave him to his own strength. By this means he treats the offender as his equal, his brother, and naturally standing upon the same ground, the vantage being entirely from divine favour; of which a man may have cause to be glad indeed, but no cause to boast.

For let the proud pharisee that shall reprove a publican with words of insultation and boasting, that he is not such a one as he, tell me how he knows, that had he been placed under the same circumstances and opportunities of sin, he should not have been prevailed upon to do the same for which, with so much arrogance, he reproves or rather baits another. Was it not the mercy of

Providence, that cast the scene of his life out of the way of temptation? that placed the flax and the stubble out of the reach of the fire? And what cause has he then to be bitter and insolent upon him that God thought fit to deny these advantages to, though otherwise of no worse mould or make, or less merit than himself?

But this is not to be passed by, that, as God most peculiarly and directly hates such an arrogant disposition, as is apt to crow and insult over the failings and lapses of others; so it is ten to one but that, some time or other, he lets loose some fierce temptation upon such a one, and leaves him so far to himself, that he falls foully and scandalously, to the perpetual abasement of his pride, and the infamy of his person: in which case, all the daggers that he threw at others, are, with greater force and sharpness, returned upon his own breast, where formerly there dwelt so little compassion to his offending brother.

And therefore, surely, I should think it concerned every one about to reprove any vicious persons whatsoever, first to allay his spirit, and to compose himself to mildness and moderation, with that excellent admonition of the apostle, Gal. vi. 1, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." And believe it, it will be but an uncomfortable revolution, when he that once bore himself high upon his innocence, and then showed no mercy upon others, shall come to have the same need of mercy himself.

(4.) The fourth and last rule that I shall mention for the completing of our direction about this duty, is, that a reproof be not continued or repeated, after amendment of that which occasioned the reproof. For this is both malicious and useless; malicious, because it renews a man's torment, and revives his calamity; and then useless, because the man is already reformed.

Pardon is still to be accompanied with oblivion: not that it is in our power to forget a thing when we will; but it is in our power to behave ourselves as if we had forgot it; with that friendliness of address, that unconcernment of speech, that openness and respect of carriage that we use to persons that never did those actions which others have only left off to do.

But to be still sarcastically reminding of a penitent amended person of his former miscarriages, which perhaps stand cancelled in heaven, and even blotted out of the book of God's remembrance; it is like the breaking open of graves, to rake out bones and putrefaction, and argues not only an unchristian, but an inhuman, wolfish disposition.

Let this suffice to render every such person inexcusable to himself, that he would not endure to wish that either God or man should deal so by him; and if so, there can be no such true and

infallible demonstration of his baseness, as the impartial measure of this rule.

And thus much for the first thing, wherein flattery does consist; namely, the concealing, and not reproving the defects and faults of obnoxious persons; which, understood with those due limitations hitherto laid down, will be able to keep him, whose place or condition may at any time call him to this work, both from a sordid, undutiful silence on one hand, and from a saucy, meddling, bitter impertinence on the other.

SERMON VIII.

PART II.

ON THE VARIOUS KINDS OF FLATTERY.

Proverbs xxix. 5.

A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

2. The second thing wherein flattery consists, is the praising and defending the defects or vices of any person. This is a step much higher than the first, which was (as we may so call it) the negative part of flattery, as consisting only in silence, and a not reproving those things that both deserved and needed reproof. And as it goes higher, so it is much more inexcusable, and uncapable of those apologies that may be alleged, though not in justification, yet at least in mitigation of the former. For partly the timorousness, partly the bashfulness of some tempers (affections not always at our command), may silence the tongue and seal up the lips, from uttering those things which the mind and judgment frequently suggests upon these occasions. A man may be sometimes even dazzled and astonished into silence by the presence of some glistering sinners; so as to be at a loss both for words and confidence to vent those reproofs that fill the conscience, and are even struggling to break forth. Certain it is, that this, or any other consideration, can by no means warrant a silence there, where religion bids a man cry aloud; nor can any one plead his modesty in prejudice of his duty: yet surely there is something at least pleadable upon this account; for the bare not-reproof of a sin, that can with no face be urged for its defence.

For pusillanimity must first pass into a prostitute impudence, before a man can arrive to that pitch as to vouch himself the encomiast of sin, and to speak panegyrics upon vice. Many a man may favour a malefactor, and wish his crime concealed or passed over, who yet would never endure to be his advocate. It is one thing for a man to shut his eyes, and so resolve not to see that which is black; another, for him with an open eye and a shameless front, to affirm black to be white, and to undertake to persuade the world so much.

But so does he that attempts the commendation of any thing lewd or vicious: he transforms the devil into an angel of light:

he confounds the distinction of those things that God has set at an infinite distance: he outfaces the common judgment of sense and reason, and the natural unforced apprehensions of mankind.

And though one would think that there is that commanding majesty in truth, as even to awe men into an acknowledgment of things to be as really they are, and generally do appear; and withal that ingenuity bred in every breast, as not to own any broad defiance of the clearest evidence: yet experience shows, that there is a sort of men in the world, that have wrought themselves to that hardiness, as to venture to tell one that has done passionately and rashly, that he did courageously and discreetly; that shall applaud him in all his follies; assuring him that if men speak amiss of his behaviour, it is rather upon the account of envy and malice to his person, than any real disapprobation of his actions; and that he is not to measure himself by the words of his adversaries, that speak their prejudice, not their judgment; oftentimes valuing that inwardly, which they inveigh against outwardly, and cherishing that in themselves, that they tax and discommend in them.

They shall tell him further, that though possibly such and such actions were faulty, and unbecoming in others, yet the difference of his condition alters the case, and changes the very quality of the action. For what should a great person have to do with humility? or the rich and the wealthy with temperance, industry, and sobriety? Why should a statesman or politician restrain himself to the punctilios of truth and sincerity? These are the virtues of mean employments and lower minds; they may, perhaps, be commendable in country gentlemen and farmers, but persons that move in a higher sphere must have a greater latitude and compass for their motion; and it were infinite weakness and inexperience to stick at a lie or an oath, or the taking away of an innocent life, when reason of state requires it, and so unshackles its ministers from the bonds of those nice rules that are to hold and direct other mortals.

And if these actions have a cleanly and a successful issue, they shall certainly find sycophants enough to extol them for the greatest prudence and wisdom that in such grand and difficult affairs could be shown: they shall at least be vouched necessary, and consequently lawful, or as good; and the authors of such actions seldom seek for or desire any further warrant for them than necessity, though it be of their own making.

But that people may not be wicked without some plea or pretence, to cover and protect them from being thought so, there has a very serviceable distinction been found out and asserted by some, between a religious and a political conscience, in every one that is a governor; the former is to guide him as such a particular person, having a soul to save; the other to rule and direct him, as a person entrusted with the good, safety, and protection

of those that are under his government, and consequently empowered to use all those courses that serve as means absolutely necessary to compass such an end: which two capacities, as they are very different, so it seems that they cannot both proceed by the same rule. Forasmuch as a governor, in many junctures and circumstances of affairs, cannot reach the ends of government, in protecting and securing his people, but by sometimes having recourse to those ways and actions that perhaps are not allowable upon the strict rules and measures of religion, which if rigidly and unseasonably adhered to in such instances, may possibly throw all into ruin and confusion.

For answer to which: it is not for me to interpose in what concerns government and governors; it has its mystery, and those that manage it are to be presumed best to understand it; but as for this distinction between a religious and a political conscience, I shall make bold to give it its due, in saying that in all those cases in which it comes to be practised, it subverts religion. For to affirm that there is any capacity or condition of man, of which religion is not a competent rule, is to make it a rule infinitely short and insufficient, as to the guidance and direction of the manners and actions of mankind; the great end for which God designs it.

Besides the gross absurdity of placing the same man under two contrary rules; which is to bring him under two contrary duties; and to make him at the same time obliged to do a thing, and yet upon another score discharged from that obligation; which is a ridiculous contradiction.

Many things indeed are distinguished in speculation, that perfectly coincide, and are inseparably the same in practice. And though it is not to be denied, that the capacity of a man and of a governor differ in apprehension; forasmuch as to be a man and to be a governor are not the same thing: yet when we come to behold those two capacities, as they really exist in nature, we shall find, that what is done by one is also done by the other, and what befalls one consequentially befalls the other. If the governor sins, the man will not be innocent; and if the man is sick, the governor will find himself but ill at ease. He that breaks the law under one capacity, shall suffer under both, and then, setting aside all the niceties of speculation, if God condemns king Ahab, I believe it will be hard to distinguish the man Ahab out of the same condemnation.

But now, if to persuade men out of the acknowledgment of the evil and unlawfulness of their actions, be flattery; and further, to use arguments and acts to settle them in such a persuasion, be one of the grossest and most detestable sorts of it, especially if religion be abused to so base a purpose; then surely none are so deeply chargeable with flattery as these two sorts of men.

1st. Such as, upon principles of enthusiasm, assure persons of eminence and high place, that those transgressions of the divine law are allowable in them, that are absolutely prohibited and condemned in others. For thus they reason: That the divine laws and precepts were intended only for the ordinary rules of life; but such as are extraordinary persons, raised up by God for some extraordinary work, are exempted from those common obligations; as being directed by a higher rule, namely, the immediate dictates of the Spirit speaking and acting within them, which Spirit being God, is able to dispense with his own laws, and accordingly does so, as the exigence of those works, that he calls such persons to, shall require. So that for them to rob and plunder, is as justifiable as for the Israelites to rob the Egyptians; and to slay and murder, though it be princes, is but like Phinehas's standing up and executing justice; the inward motions of the Spirit countermanding the injunctions of the outward letter.

But to raise in any such an opinion of themselves, is surely one of the vilest and most destructive pieces of flattery that can be used by one man to another: for it is to make religion minister the same scope and license to the most impious actions that atheism itself can allow; and that with this advantage, that it does not trouble the mind with the same stings and remorses, that the professed despiser of religion usually feels in the midst of all his extravagancies: for if a man is brought to believe that he breaks the divine law with as good a conscience as others keep and observe it, there is no doubt but such a belief will keep him at perfect peace with himself, notwithstanding the most enormous violations of it.

I cannot believe that the authors of our late confusions could have ever acted in such a barefaced opposition to all laws, both human and divine, with so much satisfaction, serenity, and composure of mind, had not their seducing prophets thoroughly leavened them with this principle; that being the select people of God, and so stirred up and peculiarly called to "serve him in their generation" (as the phrase then ran), they were privileged from those ordinary rules and measures by which the lawfulness and morality of other men's actions were determined. The saints indeed might do the very same actions which in other men were sinful, but yet they in so doing could not sin; and this was that persuasion that still patched up their conscience, after all the blows and wounds it had received by dashing against the divine precepts.

Such was the soul-destroying flattery, by which those impostors encouraged many thousands in the way of damnation; like that lying prophet, that bid Ahab go and prosper, when he sent him to the battle in which he was to fall and perish.

2dly. The other sort of persons chargeable with this kind of

flattery, are the Romish casuists, who have made it their greatest study and business to put a new face upon sin, and to persuade the world that many of those actions that have hitherto passed for impious and unlawful, are indeed nothing such, but admit of such qualifications as clear them of all guilt and irregularity.

They are not indeed so absurdly impudent as to declare that murder is no sin, but they will order the matter so, that a man may be killed upon many punctilios of credit and reputation, and yet no murder be committed. They will not tell a man that it is allowable to steal, but they will teach, that in case a servant finds that his master will not afford him wages, proportionable to what he judges his own service to be worth, he may take from him so much as will amount to a valuable compensation, and not be chargeable with a breach of that law that prohibits a man to steal. They will not deny many actions to be evil; but if a man have but the dexterity and art of directing his intention to some right end, or at least of not actually directing it to an ill; why then presently the whole action loses all its malignity, and becomes pure and innocent, by a wonderful but a very easy transformation.

It were infinite to draw forth all particulars; but these are some of the ways by which these religious sycophants have poisoned the fountains of morality, and flattered mankind with such doctrines and assertions, as shall soothe them up, and embolden them in the most vicious and lewd courses imaginable. They have opened a well not only for sinners, but even for sin itself to wash in, and to be clean. So that if there be any persons in the world who may be justly accused for calling good evil and evil good, these are the men; and they do it too, diligently, copiously, and voluminously, and consequently have the fullest and the fairest claim to the curse that is joined to that accusation.

But now this kind of flattery is so much the more to be abominated, because as it is of most mischievous consequence, so it is also of very easy effect, and meets with a strange success, seldom returning without accomplishing the work of persuasion, or rather indeed of fallacy and delusion.

Of which a double reason may be assigned: (1.) The first taken from the nature of man. (2.) The other from the very nature of vice itself.

(1.) For the first of which; it is too apparent how fond and credulous most men are, and even desirous to be persuaded into a good estimation of whatsoever they do; and therefore as some people will buy and use flattering glasses, though they know them to be so, because they had rather please themselves with a false representation, than view their deformity by a true: so some will catch at any colour or dress (though never so thin) to give some varnish and better appearance to their vice.

A perverted disordered mind, if it cannot have arguments and solid reasons to allege for the legality of what it does, it will content and satisfy itself with flourishes and shows of probability; and that deceiver that shall labour to furnish it with such, shall be welcome and honourable; his dictates shall be received as oracles, and never sifted by questions and examinations; for people are naturally averse from inquiring after that which they are unwilling to know, and therefore such a one shall be even prevented by a willing forward assent. But it is easy for a man to finish his visit, that is met three parts of his way.

(2.) The other reason is from the very nature of vice itself, which oftentimes bears a great affinity to virtue, and so admits of the harder distinction. Upon which account it is no difficult matter to persuade the prodigal person, that he is only very liberal: it being very hard to assign the precise point where liberality ceases, and prodigality begins. Upon the same ground, covetousness may easily pass for providence, and a proud mind be mistaken for a high and generous spirit, there being a great likeness in the actions respectively belonging to each of these, enough to impose upon unwary undistinguishing minds, that are prone to receive every *like* for the *same*.

Now from these two considerations we may easily gather, how open the hearts of most men lie, to drink in the fawning suggestions of any sycophant that shall endeavour to relieve their disturbed consciences, by gilding their villanies with the name of virtues; and so smoothing the broad way before them, that they may find no rub or let in their passage to damnation. This therefore is the second thing wherein flattery consists.

3. The third is, the perverse imitation of any one's defects or vices, which seems to carry it higher than the former, forasmuch as actions are much more considerable than words or discourses. A man, for many causes, may be brought to commend that which he will never be prevailed upon to follow, but for any one to transcribe and copy out in himself whatsoever he sees ridiculous or impious in another, this argues a temper made up of nothing but baseness and servility.

And to any generous and free spirit it is really a very nauseous and a fulsome thing to see some prostitute their tongues and their judgments, by saying as others say, commending what they commend, dispraising whatsoever things or persons they dispraise, and framing themselves to any absurd gesture or motion that they observe in them; making themselves as it were an echo to their voice, and a shadow to their bodies. In a word; no man can be exact and perfect in this way of flattery, without being a monkey and a mimic, and a lump of wax for any fool to stamp his image upon.

But surely few would be so sottish and servile, as to break a leg or an arm, or put out an eye, because they see the great per-

son whom they depend upon and adore, deprived of any of these parts. And if so, do they not consider that a man is to be more tender of his manners and the dignity of his soul, than of any thing that belongs to his body, which would give him but a small preeminence above the brutes, were it not animated and exalted by a principle of reason?

Every kind of imitation speaks the person that imitates inferior to him whom he imitates, as the copy is to the original; but then to imitate that which is mean, base, and unworthy, is to do one of the lowest actions in a yet lower instance; it is to climb downwards, to employ art and industry to learn a defect and an imperfection; which is a direct reproach to reason, and a contradiction to the methods of nature.

And so much the more intolerable is it, because such persons are seldom seen to imitate the excellencies and the virtues of him whom they flatter; these are looked upon with distance and lazy admiration; but if there be any vice that sullies and takes off from the lustre of his other good qualities, that shall be sure to be culled out, and writ upon their lives and behaviour. Alexander had enough to imitate him in his drunkenness and his passion, who never intended to be like him, either in his chastity, or his justice to his enemies, and his liberality to his friends. And it is reported of Plato, that being crook-shouldered, his scholars, who so much admired him, would endeavour to be like him, by bolstering out their garments on that side, that so they might appear crooked too. It is probable that many of these found it easier to imitate Plato's shoulders than his philosophy; and to stuff out their gowns, than to furnish their understandings, or improve their minds.

I am confident there is none that does not deride and condemn this silly piece of officiousness, as scarce to be reconciled to common sense; yet we may find as bad daily in the behaviour of most parasites, who think they can never honour their great masters, but by exposing themselves. Which practice, though it is most irrational, yet it has this to encourage and continue it, that such grandees are wonderfully pleased to see their vices and defects aped by their followers and retainers; indeed, much more than to see their perfections drawn into imitation.

And that I conceive for this reason; because vice being weak and shameful, is glad to have any countenance and credit shown it; which is done by no way so much, as by having many followers. To be vicious alone is a great shame, and few natures are able to bear it; and therefore company gives a kind of authority to sin, and brings vice into fashion, which is able to commend and set off any thing. Nero's killing his mother could not but be looked upon as a hideous and unnatural thing, for all the senate's public thanking of him for it, and his courtiers' applauding of the action; because in this, humanity was too

strong for flattery, and suffered none of them to practise what their slavish disposition induced them to commend; which shows how much the greater number of flatterers speak against their conscience: for that which a man in the same condition would not do himself, he certainly dislikes in another.

4. The fourth and last thing that I shall mention, wherein flattery consists, is an overvaluing those virtues and perfections that are really laudable in any person. This is a different sort from all the former, which had no foundation of good at all to work upon, but were wholly employed in giving appearances where there was no substance, in painting of rotten sepulchres, and belying vice into the reputation of virtue.

But this is more modest and tolerable, there being some groundwork of desert, though much too narrow for those huge superstructures of commendation that some raise upon it; which therefore turn into flattery, which consists in a partial representation of any thing to be greater and better than indeed it is: for truth suffers as much by this as by the former; it being violated by any disproportion between the thing as it is expressed, and as it does exist.

The flatterer views every little virtue or good quality in him whom he resolves to extol, as it were, with a microscope, such a one as shall swell a gnat into an elephant, and an elephant into a mountain. Ordinary, plain, home-spun sense shall be magnified for extraordinary wit and fancy; and good, honest, flat words, shall pass for propriety and exactness of expression.

But to go higher. Let a star be accounted, as indeed it is, a bright and a glorious thing; yet we are not therefore to persuade the world that it is a sun. Herod, no doubt, in Acts xii. 22, spoke like an eloquent man, yet that was short of speaking with "the voice of a god," as his flatterers told him in that their impious and profuse acclamation. He that should celebrate a captain that had the good fortune to worst the enemy in a skirmish, to the degree of a Cæsar or an Alexander, would wonderfully stretch and overdo, and render the poor man ridiculous instead of glorious: and every one that measures his actions by any elogies given him by the flatterer, sets his reputation upon stilts, which is not the surest way of standing; and when he comes to be weighed in the balance of the impartial and the judicious, will be found wanting.

For look, as the detractor represents the perfections of him whom he hates, lessened and diminished from what they really are, partly by a malicious concealment, partly by calumny and direct slander; so the flatterer, whose design is managed by a contrary way (though perhaps in itself the same), greatens and advances every thing beyond the bounds of its real worth; describing all in hyperboles, high strains, and words of wonder, till he has puffed up that little thing that he commends, as we see

men do a bladder, which owes all its bulk only to air and wind, upon the letting out of which, it returns and shrinks into a pitiful nothing.

And just so must the opinion that a man conceives of himself from the delusions of flattery, vanish and have its end: for, like a feather, it was raised by a breath, and therefore, when that breath ceases, it must fall to the ground again.

And thus I have finished the first general head under which I cast the prosecution of the words, namely, to show what flattery was, and wherein it did consist. I do not profess myself so skilful and experienced in it, or desirous to be so, as to affirm that I have recounted all the ways and methods, all the turnings and meanders, through which this various thing uses to wind and carry itself. But these are enough to serve as a rule by which both to direct our own actions, and to judge of the actions and behaviour of other men. They may convince us how vast a difference there is between flattery and friendship, and between the crafty, low mind of a flatterer, and the generous disposition of a friend. But when I have said all of the baseness of this art, yet so long as men find it beneficial, and withal see the world full of those that are willing to be made fools of by it, I believe all that I shall persuade men of will be this; that they are like to get more by practising of it, than any one else shall get by speaking against it.

SERMON IX.

PART III.

THE GROUNDS AND OCCASIONS OF FLATTERY.

PROVERBS XXIX. 5.

A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

II. THE second general head proposed for the prosecution of these words, was to show what were the grounds and occasions of flattery, on his part that is flattered: I shall mention three:

1. Greatness of place or condition. There is nothing that secures a man from flattery more than the confident and free access of ingenuous persons. But confidence and freedom are seldom found but where there is a parity of conditions: reproof being of the nature of those things that seldom ascend and move upwards; but it either passes to an equal, or descends upon an inferior. He that is great and potent casts an awe and a terror round about him, and (as it were) shuts and barricadoes himself in from all approaches, like mount Sinai, where the fire burning, and the voice thundering, would suffer none to come near it; so that such a one is still treated with silence and distance; his faults are whispered behind his back; he is scoffed at in little rooms and merry meetings, and never hears the severe healing truths that are spoken of him; but lives muffled and blindfold, unacquainted with himself, and the judgments of men concerning him.

Upon which account great persons, unless their understandings are very great too, and withal unprejudiced with self-love, so as to be their own monitors, and impartial exactors of themselves, are of all others the most miserable. For though a reproof might open their eyes and correct their behaviour; and though there are not wanting those that are concerned for their good; yet they fright away all these remedies, and live and die strangers to their cure.

For in this case men consider, first, the great danger of speaking freely to great persons what they are not willing to hear. It may enrage, and make them their mortal enemies. It may render them as great in malice as they are in power and condition. It is at best a very bold venture, and greatness is not so tractable a thing, as to lay itself quietly open to the reprehender and the faithful admonisher, who speak for the man's advantage

more than for his pleasure, and bring him physic instead of sweetmeats. The experience men have in the world usually makes them fearful to engage in unpleasing offices. Especially when they consider further, how easy it is to be safe and silent; and how little it concerns them to court a trouble, a danger, and a potent displeasure, by endeavouring to do a man good against his will. They think it a great folly to put themselves upon a harsh, and the same also a thankless employment; to lose an interest and a great friend, only for doing that which they could with much more ease have let alone.

Men see also how ill it has fared with such as have presumed to be free with the grandees of the world, in point of reproof and animadversion: they have been rewarded with frowns, sharpness, and disdain, and sent away with dejected countenances; as if the reprovers themselves had been the persons in fault. Majesty and power usually think virtue and happiness itself bought at too dear a rate, if it be at the price of an admonition.

For all which causes, persons of evil or low minds, which make up much the greater part of the world, are willing to follow their game, and to cajole and flatter a vicious greatness, since it turns so much to their profit and reputation; while the great one, that is abused according to his own heart's desire, bids the flatterer sit at his right hand; in the mean time making his impartial friend and reprover his footstool, slighting him for his upright dealing, and sending him to his own virtue for a reward.

2. The second ground of flattery, on his part that is flattered, is an angry, passionate disposition, and impatient of reproof. This also frights and deters men from doing the office of friends, in a faithful reprehension. For some minds are more raging and tumultuous than the sea itself, so that if Christ himself should rebuke them, instead of being calm, they would rage and roar so much the louder. That admonition that would reclaim others, does but chase and provoke them; as the same breath of wind that cools some things, kindles and inflames others. No sooner do some hear their behaviour taxed, though with the greatest tenderness and moderation, but their choler begins to boil, and their breast is scarce able to contain and keep it from running over into the heights and furies of bitterness and impatience. The man, instead of correcting his fault, will redouble it with a greater; add fierceness to his folly, affronting and reviling him that would unbesot and reform him.

Now it requires a person not only of friendship and fidelity, but also of courage and valour, to undertake to be a reprover here; forasmuch as to reprove such a one is, in effect, to give him battle: he must be able to bear, and what is more, to slight and tame his rage; he must not sneak and fly back at every great word, nor suffer himself to be talked and vapoured out of countenance.

But few people are able, and fewer willing, to put themselves to so great an inconvenience for another's good, and to raise a storm about their own ears, to do an odious ungrateful piece of service for an ungrateful person; and therefore men usually deal with such currish sharp natures as they do with mastiffs, they are fain to stroke them, though they deserve to be cudgelled; they flatter and commend them to keep them quiet, and to compose the unruly humour which is ready to grow and improve upon the least check or opposition.

From the consideration of which we easily see the great misery and disadvantage of passionate angry persons; their passion does not only bereave them of their own eyes, but also of the benefit of other men's; which he that is of a gentle and a tractable nature enjoys in the midst of all his errors; for his friend sees, and judges, and chooses for him, when the present precipitation of his mind hurries him beside the steady use of his reason. He is reduced by counsel, rectified and recalled by one that sees his fault, and dares tell him of it; so that the cure is almost as early as the distemper.

We may observe of brambles, that they always grow crooked, for by reason of their briars and thorns no hand can touch them, so as to bend them straight. And so it is with some dispositions; they grow into a confirmed settled obliquity, because their sharpness makes them unfit to be handled by discipline and admonition. They are a terror and a grievance to those that they converse with; and to attempt to advise them out of their irregularities, is as if a chirurgeon should offer to dress a wounded lion; he must look to perish in the address, and to be torn in pieces for his pains.

It was surely of very great importance to Nabal, mentioned in 1 Sam. xxv., to have been admonished of the rough unadvised answer that he returned to David's soldiers; for it was like to have brought a ruin upon him and his family and his whole estate; yet none would do him that seasonable kindness, because of the rudeness and churlishness of his manners: for in the 17th verse that character is given of him, that "he was such a son of Belial, that a man could not speak to him."

Many would be willing to recover a person from his follies, but they are not willing to be snapped and railed at for so doing; they would be ready enough to pluck a brand out of the fire, might they do it without burning their fingers. But to be foolish and to be angry too, is for a man first to cast himself into a pit, and then to hinder others from pulling him out.

3. The third and last ground of flattery, on his part that is flattered, is a proud and vain-glorious disposition. To tell a proud person of his faults, is to tell infallibility that it is in an error, and to spy out something amiss in perfection. Such a one looks upon himself as above all defects, and privileged from doing

any thing mean, low, or obnoxious. There is no quality that more estranges a man from the free addresses of his friends, and their hearty communications of their thoughts concerning him, than a high conceit and opinion of himself: for this makes him rate all other men's judgments by his own measures, and set that price upon himself and his actions, that he thinks all the world must come up to. And therefore he that taxes or reprehends him, must expect the same credit and success that he is like to find, that should accuse an only son to his fond mother: he would quickly experiment, that love is wonderfully blind, but especially about those things that it has no mind to see.

A proud person, who, with the worst kind of idolatry, adores himself, and what is more, the worst part of himself, his defects and vices, thinks that his doing of any action is sufficient to stamp it decent and virtuous. As it is reported of Cato being drunk, that one should say of him, by reason of his reputation, so much too great for any slander, that it would be easier to prove that drunkenness was no vice, than that Cato could be vicious; so some people, though they spoil every thing by an undue management of it, lose opportunities, and overlook occasions, yet they must be thought to be still carrying on designs of policy, to err and mistake prudentially: the world must persuade itself out of its own experience, and believe surmises though contradicted by effects. It must be willing to be sunk by the hands of such skilful pilots, and judge the foolishness of some to be wiser than the wisdom of others.

Now those that would have the world maintain such an opinion of them, are the fairest and the broadest mark for the flatterer to shoot at that can be, the fittest persons to be made buffoons of: for do but command and praise them to their face, and you may pick their pockets, cut their throats, and cheat them of their estates. Nor need the flatterer fear that they will look through his design, and so discover and loathe all his feigned encomiums; for let them be never so gross and palpable, let him lay it on never so thick, yet pride and conceitedness will swallow all, and look upon itself obliged too, for being so kindly abused.

And it has been sometimes seen, that a man, while he has been flattering and extolling an opinionative fool (who has with much pleasure heard and embraced him, for the glorious things he so liberally spoke of him), he has now and then turned his head aside, and flouted and laughed at him to his companions, for suffering himself to be held by the nose by such pitiful arts, so easily discerned and detected by any persons of discretion.

Upon an easy observation we shall find, that there is nothing that renders a man more ridiculous, in most of the passages of his life, than much credulity; there is nothing that more certainly makes him a prey to the deceiver and the cheat: but now this is the inseparable property of pride and self-estimation. Every such

person carries a belief about him so strong and so great, that it is impossible to overwork it: he will turn every romance into a real history, and even believe contradictions in his own behalf.

Which being so, if a man be great and potent as well as proud, it is no wonder if he is always plied with flatterers, and if they resort to him as the crows do to a carcass, always fluttering and chattering about him; for alas! he thinks they are only doing him right, and admiring him for that which he himself admires much more. Pride makes him lift his eyes upward, which is the reason that he never turns them inward; and so being unknown to himself, he must believe the deceiver upon his own word.

Now the deduction that I shall make from all this is, that of the many arguments and signs of real friendship, none is so sure and infallible, as a readiness to reprehend impartially and seasonably whatsoever needs reprehension. For it is clear, that he that does so, prefers the good of him whom he reprehends before his own interest. He knows not but his proud and impatient humour may make him disgust and persecute him, for giving him so free and true a view of himself; but yet he ventures all to redeem him from shame and disorder: in a word, he resolves to do the part of a friend, though his very doing so makes him forfeit his being thought so. He that carries on no design for his own advantage in what he does, gives an unfailing demonstration of his sincerity; and he that tells a man what he knows, will find but a small acceptance with him (as the story of his faults is like to do), hazards his friend's favour, and with that his own emolument; and really makes himself and his hopes a sacrifice to the other's reputation.

Having thus finished the second general head, and shown the grounds and occasions of flattery on his part that is flattered; I proceed now to the

III. And last, which is to show *the ends and designs of it on his part that flatters:* and those are briefly comprised in these words of the text, "He spreads a net for his neighbour's feet."

It is a metaphor borrowed from the practice of hunters or fowlers. And now, as there is no man that spreads a net, but does it with this double intention; first, to catch and destroy the thing for which he spreads it; and then, by so doing, to advantage himself, as either in his pleasure or his profit: so accordingly, every flatterer, in all his fawnings and dissimulations, is acted and influenced by these two grand purposes: 1. To serve himself. 2. To undermine him whom he flatters, and thereby to effect his ruin.

1. And first, he designs to benefit and serve himself. In all that artificial scene that he lays, by adoring and commending this or that great person, he intends not so much *to praise* as *to be* what the other is. He would be great, rich, and honourable;

and that puts him upon the dissembler's drudgery to enslave himself to all his humours; to extol his impertinences, and adore his very villanies. It is not for want of wit or apprehension that the flatterer speaks such paradoxes; for he sees through that great and glorious bauble that he so cringes to; he despises him heartily, while he harangues him magnificently; his thoughts and his words are at a perpetual jar and distance; he thinks satires, while he speaks panegyrics.

Nay, and perhaps he hates and abhors his own ill fate too, that should force him to take such a sordid course to advance himself; that should make him fall down before such an image, and worship such an illustrious piece of emptiness. But profit reconciles evil minds to the coarsest and lowest services; and men are willing to bow their bodies, and stoop down to take up a jewel, or a piece of gold, though it be from a dunghill.

But it is evident, that every flatterer designs only his own advantage, whether there be or be not any real foundation of worth in him whom he pretends to admire: and that from this one consideration, that the same person, in case he falls from his greatness and power, is presently deserted, and finds all his parasite's encomiums turned into scoffs and invectives. The man's virtue, if he had any, remains untouched, and perhaps by his calamity improved. He can be as valiant, as just and temperate, as he was before; but what is that to the purpose? He cannot reward or prefer; he cannot frown an enemy into ruin, or smile a friend or a dependent into a fair fortune. And if so, the flatterer thinks he should but lose his time and his breath to declaim and be eloquent upon so dry a subject. No; his game lies another way; he bids good-night to the setting, and reserves his devotion for the rising sun. Men may be both wise and virtuous; but it is their power that makes them commended for being so.

And from this it is also, that we may observe in flatterers such great difference in the behaviour of the same person at one time, from what it is at another. While he is yet upon the chace, and a getting, none so humble, so abject, so full of all servile compliances; but when his nest is feathered, and his bags full, he can be insolent and haughty, he can bend his knee as stiffly, and keep his distance as magisterially as another. For, like Saul, after he comes to a crown and a kingdom, he then presently finds in himself another spirit, and disdains to look after those asses that he used formerly so much to follow. Let his old rich patrons now commend themselves; he has served his turn of them, caught the fish, and he cares for no more. After the young one is grown up, and well thriven, it follows the dam no longer; but instead of following it, if occasion serves, it can kick it. No man uses flattery as his employment, but as his instrument; and consequently, when it has done his work, he lays it aside. And thus much for the flatterer's first design, which is to serve and advantage himself.

2. His second is to undermine and ruin him whom he flatters. He finds his interest and affairs cast so, that he is not like to be considerable without the downfall of such or such a person; who yet is so great and powerful, that he despairs to shake him by violence and direct force; and therefore he endeavours to circumvent him by art: to which purpose, he pretends himself an admirer of his extraordinary parts and virtues, tickles his ears with perpetual applauses of all his words and actions; and by this means he gets the esteem of a friend, and with that an opportunity of working under ground. But all this while he is big with a design of mischief: he is only taking aim where he may shoot him surely and mortally: so that all the fair speeches and fine flowers that he strews in the other's way, are only to cover and conceal the fatal gin and trap that he has placed, to catch and bring him into the hands of the destroyer. And it is very frequent, that the flatterer, by taking this course, makes his design effectual, and compasses the ruin of him whom he flatters; and that upon these several accounts.

(1.) First, by this means he deceives him, and grossly abuses and perverts his judgment, which should be the guide and director of all his actions. A right judgment is to the soul what a strong and a healthful constitution is to the body; it will, by its own force, work off all lesser inconveniences and distempers. Though a man be sometimes driven aside by his passions and his irregular appetites; yet so long as his mind and understanding has an habitually true notion and apprehension of things, it will recover the man, and prevent the error from being infinite. And therefore, according to that advice given to the soldier, *τὴν κεφαλὴν πεφύλαξο*, "secure your head;" so is every one to be careful to preserve his judging faculties entire, that he may not be abused into false choices, and imposed upon by undue and fallacious conclusions: for a flaw in these leaves the soul like an army without conduct, exposed to all the miseries of dispersion and confusion.

He that is thoroughly deceived, is in the very next disposition to be ruined; for cast but a mist before a man's eyes, and whither may you not lead him? He marches on with as much confidence into a slough or a pitfall, as he would tread the direct paths that lead to his own house. None plays the fool confidently, but he that verily believes he does wisely. He is flattered into mistakes and false measures of his actions, and views all the passages of his behaviour by a false light, the consequences of which must needs be destructive and miserable.

And therefore every flatterer who endeavours to delude and blind the judgment of a man, properly gives him a fatal wound in the head; and if that be crazed and giddy, it is not the absolute entire perfection of all the other parts of the body, that can suffice to regulate and direct so much as any one action of life. The whole tenor of a man's behaviour in this case is like the

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motion of a watch that has a fault in the spring; he is rendered utterly useless, as to all great and considerable purposes.

(2.) The flatterer undermines, and perhaps, in the issue, ruins him whom he flatters, by bringing him to shame, and a general contempt; for he deals with him like one that pins some ridiculous thing upon another's back, and then sends him with it into the market-place, where he finds himself hooted and laughed at by all, but walks on wholly ignorant of the cause. The flatterer tells an impertinent talking grandee, that his discourse wonderfully becomes him; that he utters himself with extraordinary grace and exactness of speech: he accordingly believes him, and gives his tongue no rest, but is still proclaiming his emptiness and indiscretion in all companies. He tells another passionate furioso, that it argues height and gallantry of spirit, not to endure the least undervaluing word, the least shadow of an affront; and he accordingly, upon every trivial occasion, takes fire, and flames out into all the expressions of rage and revenge; and, for his pains, is despised by some, hated by others, and opposed by all; and these are the effects and favours of flattery.

In a word, the flatterer deals with the flattered person as the Philistines did with Samson, first putting out his eyes, and then making him a mock and a sport to all that had a mind to divert themselves with his calamity. Shame, of itself, is indeed a great misery; but then we are to consider further, that as to the real advantages of the world, it is to be reckoned amongst the surest and speediest causes of a man's ruin. For who will employ, who will prefer or recommend a despised person? Kindness and contempt seldom lodge upon the same object. But suppose that a man had a kindness for such a one, yet he would not be able to own the effects of such a kindness, against the general envy and derision and censures of the world; bad certificates to vouch a man's fitness for any place or preferment.

Shame and contempt casts a man under the feet of those whom he converses with; in which case, we cannot presume upon any such redundancy of compassion and good nature amongst men, as to imagine that any one can be under foot without being trampled upon. He that slights me himself cannot possibly be my friend, but he that endeavours to make others slight me too, must needs be my mortal enemy.

3. The flatterer undermines and effects the ruin of him whom he flatters; forasmuch as by this means he renders his recovery and amendment impossible. Every fault in a man shuts the door upon virtue, but flattery is the thing that seals it. Solomon gives his judgment in the case fully and unanswerably, Prov. xxvi. 12, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of that man." A man's way out of error lies through the paths of conviction; and he that recovers a fool must first unbefool him to that degree, as to persuade him of his folly:

for it is a thing against nature and reason for a man to think of amendment, who at the same time thinks himself perfect. No man surely prepares himself for travel, while he supposes himself at his journey's end.

He that makes another sick, and brings him under a distemper, does not presently destroy him, because there is still a remedy in physic; but he that persuades a sick, distempered person that he is well, and so keeps him from the use of physic, he certainly is preparing a coffin for him, and designs nothing but to bring him to his grave.

Every flatterer, by infusing into a man a good opinion of his defects and vices, endeavours to fasten and rivet them into his behaviour for ever; for no man leaves what he cannot dislike. Persuade a prisoner or a captive that his prison is a paradise, and you shall never hear him petition for a release. Vice indeed captivates and enslaves wheresoever it prevails, but flattery strives to make the mind in love with its slavery, and so to render that slavery perpetual and unalterable; it would fain intoxicate and charm a man into a kind of stupidity and impotence to help himself. In short, it uses him as Jael did Sisera, it pretends to refresh and entertain him kindly, but it designs only to nail his head to the ground.

And thus I have endeavoured to lay open the flatterer's ends and purposes. Where, upon the result of all, it is perhaps a disputable case, whether of the two is a worse thing, to flatter, or to be flattered; to be so sordid, and withal mischievous, as to practise the one, or so blind and sottishly easy as to suffer the other. But the truth is, this latter is the object of pity, as the former is of the justest hatred and detestation. In fine, it must be the harmlessness of the dove that must keep a man from doing one, and the wisdom of the serpent that must preserve him from being abused by the other; neither of which virtues can be had in any perfection, but from the grace and bounty of him who is the author and giver of every good and perfect gift.

SERMON X.

PART I.

ON THE NATURE OF PRESUMPTUOUS SINS.

PSALM XIX. 13.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.

THESE words running in the form of a prayer or petition, may suggest these three things to our consideration: 1. The thing prayed against, presumptuous sins. 2. The person making this prayer, king David; one adorned with the highest elogies for his piety, even by God himself. 3. The means that he engages for his deliverance from the thing he prays against; namely, the divine grace and assistance: "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins."

All these things lie naturally and evidently in the text; and there is no doubt, but that it may be most pertinently handled in a distinct prosecution of them. But I shall choose rather to frame my thoughts into another method, and designing to take in and comprehend all these in the progress of the following discourse, I shall cast the discussion of the words under these two general heads:

I. To show what those presumptuous sins are.

II. To show the reason of this so holy and excellent person's so earnestly praying against them.

I. As for the first of these, *what presumptuous sins are.* In the handling of this, I shall do these three things:

1. I shall show in general what it is to presume.

2. I shall assign some of the most notable kinds of presumptuous sins.

3. I shall prescribe some remedies against them,

1. And for the first, *what it is in general to presume;* where, before we proceed to any strict and positive definition of it, we may briefly take notice of the description it lies under in the word of God, which sets forth this sin by various, and those very significant expressions. It calls it a man's "hardening of his heart:" "hardening his neck," "hardening his face," and, in a word, "hardening himself against God." It calls it a "walking frowardly," and a "walking contrary to God;" as also, a "resisting of the Holy Ghost;" and a "grieving and doing despite to the

Spirit of grace." It is likewise expressed by a man's going on in his own ways, and refusing to be reformed, with the like: that is, all the several evils and provoking malignities that are in obstinacy, stubbornness, impudence, and direct contempt of God, like so many lines in their centre, meet and concur for the making up of the character of presumption.

But that we may yet view the nature of it more closely, and define what it is: to presume, or to commit a presumptuous sin, is for a man, in the doing of any unlawful or suspicious action, to expect and promise himself impunity upon those grounds that indeed afford no reason for any such expectation.

So that, to the making up of such a sin, these three integral parts are required:

(1.) That a man undertake an action, known by him to be unlawful, or at least doubtful.

(2.) That notwithstanding this, he promise to himself security from any punishment of right consequent upon it.

(3.) And lastly, that he do this upon motives utterly groundless and unreasonable.

In this order therefore does presumption accomplish its course of acting in the heart of the presuming sinner. For, as for the thing that he is about to do; he either doubts whether it be lawful or no, or he certainly knows that it is unlawful; whereupon, if on either hand he proceeds to the doing of it, he infallibly bolts upon a sin, because he certainly acts against conscience, either doubtful or knowing; both of which will involve him in sin: for to act against a knowing conscience, is apparently sinful: and to act also against the doubting, from the mouth of the apostle, receives the express sentence of condemnation; "He that doubteth is damned if he eat," Rom. xiv., last verse.

Now the presuming sinner, knowing the action he is attempting to be unlawful, or, at the best suspecting it as doubtful, proceeds notwithstanding this dissatisfaction, to deliberate and advise with himself, whether he should undertake it or no, he argues the case with himself on both sides. On one side he pleads the unlawfulness, or at least the suspiciousness of it, and the great danger that may follow upon either. On the other, he thinks of the pleasure, the profit, and the advantage of the thing under debate, together with a supposed probability of escape and impunity, though he does commit it. And hereupon, as the result and upshot of his deliberation, he comes to fix and to resolve that he will do it, be the consequence what it will; though yet he believes he shall carry the matter so, as to bring himself off clear and harmless after all: and thus from suspense he proceeds to resolution, and from resolution passes into action; and so stands a perfect, complete, presumptuous sinner before God, as having brought his sin to maturity and actual commission, through all the by-traces, all the rubs and impediments that either conscience or Providence laid in its way.

From what has been said, we may here observe, that the presumptuous sinner is utterly divested of those two only pleas that can be alleged for the extenuation of sin, as, 1. Ignorance. 2. Surprise.

And first, as for ignorance. Though the case is such in the rules of morality, that no ignorance of things, lying under necessary practice, can be totally inculpable; and so cannot wholly excuse the guilt of the action occasioned by it: yet as to an extenuation of the degree, we find the plea of it frequently admitted in scripture; as "the servant that knew not his lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, was therefore beaten but with few stripes," Luke xii. 48. And our Saviour himself grounds his prayer for his murderers upon their ignorance of what they did, Luke xxiii. 34, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And St. Paul gives the same account of his obtaining mercy after his blasphemies and persecutions, 1 Tim. i. 13, "I obtained mercy," says he, "because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief." So that ignorance, we see, though not by any virtue in itself, but by the mere mercy, and goodness, and condescension of God, has prevailed and been effectual for the covering of a multitude of sins, not yet grown too big for pardon.

But now the presumptuous sinner cuts himself off from all such plea; for he sins with a high hand, with an open and a seeing eye. His conscience is all the time awake, like a thief that breaks open a house in the face of the sun, and amidst the resorts of a market. The motto of a presuming sinner may be, *Veni, vidi, et peccavi.* The devil told Eve, that her and her husband's eyes should be opened, upon their eating of the forbidden fruit; and accordingly, most of their posterity have since inherited the power of sinning knowingly and seeingly, of offending their Maker with counsel and deliberation. Their eyes are opened indeed with a mischief; but for that very cause their sin is heightened; and it were better for them that they were blind, for then, as said our Saviour to the Pharisees, they would have had no sin; that is, no sin in comparison: their sin would not have borne so deep a tincture, and been set off with such crimson aggravations.

As sin leaves the soul, so presumption leaves sin itself naked, by drawing from it its covering; and also helpless, by taking away its last asylum and retreat. In both of which it had a fair accommodation from ignorance, which, like darkness, invites sleep; and so is the parent of a little rest and transient quiet to sick, guilty, and disturbed consciences.

Ignorance is looked upon as so plausible a defence, that I have heard and read of those that have studiously been ignorant of the evil of an action where they have passionately desired the pleasure of it: they have endeavoured to shift off the light, and to convey themselves from the inspection of their own con-

sciences, that so their sinful delights might proceed with the greater relish and the less interruption. A pretty art for men to befool and damn themselves withal.

But such must know, that ignorance affected, and voluntarily procured, is so far from giving any mitigation or excuse to other actions, that it is not able to excuse itself. For who can defend an action, by pleading that he did it ignorantly, when it was in his power not to have been ignorant, when the means of knowledge were before him, and the neglect of them was his choice? Presumption, and such an ignorance may walk hand in hand, forasmuch as it may be resolved into presumption. It is a blindness brought upon a man, because he would not see; otherwise all ignorance, that is merely negative and inculpable presumption, is utterly inconsistent with, and makes absolutely unpleadable.

2dly. Presumption excludes all plea from surprise: a plea admitted in human courts for the diminution of the malignity of many crimes. An action not being perfectly evil, but as committed by perfect choice, which is much weakened and disturbed by the hurry of a surprise. And there is no doubt but the mercies of the court of heaven also have some grains of allowance for those actions that men are thus, in a manner, thrown headlong into. But now, where there is deliberation, there can be no surprise; forasmuch as a surprise prevents and takes a man off from all previous deliberation: and presumption is still accompanied with deliberation; it is a sin that proceeds gradually, it destroys the soul soberly, and with design.

But before I go any further, when I say that surprise takes off from the nature of presumption, so that every presumptuous sin must be supposed to be committed with deliberation, I conceive, that for the preventing of mistakes, this may need some further explication. We must know therefore, that a sin may be said to be committed deliberately, either formally or immediately, or only virtually and remotely. Of the former there can be no doubt; for in that sense a man sins deliberately, when he sins with foregoing thought, as well as with present purpose of mind. But for the latter, we may take those terms more at large thus: when a man is brought into a sudden heat of passion and confusion of spirit, in which he proceeds to blaspheme God, or to revile his prince, or the like; this blasphemy and treason of his must not think presently to take sanctuary in this pretence, that it was done only in a surprise of passion, and so ought not to be accounted presumptuous upon this ground, that it cannot pass for deliberate. This, I say, is not to be allowed, because if a man knowingly and deliberately put himself under those circumstances that raised him to that fury of passion, every action done under that passion is virtually deliberate, and follows the nature and quality of the first action, as the leading principal cause of all that directly ensued upon it.

A man drinks himself into a present rage, or distraction of mind; in which condition he is perhaps carried to commit a rape or a murder, which action is indeed in itself sudden and indeliberate; but since the man at first engaged in drinking with full choice and deliberation of mind, his passion being caused by that drink, and the murder being caused by that passion, are both of them virtually deliberate, as being resolvable into a foregoing choice: upon which score they contract the guilt and foulness of presumptuous sins, and so stand rated in the accounts of Heaven.

But here, because there is much and frequent discourse in divinity, of a distinction between sins of presumption and sins of infirmity; and since very much depends upon the right or the wrong apprehending of it in a casuistical theology, as also in the daily practices of men, it will not be amiss to inquire into the ground or reason of this distinction.

What a sin of presumption is, we have declared already; so that the whole business will lie in this, to see what that is that makes a sin to be a sin of infirmity.

Three opinions there are in this matter:

(1.) The first derives the nature of it from the condition of the agent, or him that commits it.

(2.) The second derives it from the matter of the action.

(3.) The third and last, from the principle producing it.

We shall consider each of them in their order.

(1.) First of all then, there are some who derive the nature of a sin of infirmity from the quality or condition of him that commits it; affirming every sin committed by a believer, or a person truly regenerate, to be a sin of infirmity; partly, because they say, that there is not that absolute and full concurrence of the inward principle in such a one to the commission of the sin; but chiefly because such persons, being supposed to be fixed in an unchangeable possession of the divine favour, so that they cannot possibly fall from it, no sins can be able to alter their estate; whereupon their sins lose their full effect, and become only lapses and infirmities.

For answer to this; it is not necessary here either to assert or to deny the perpetuity and unalterable tenor of a regenerate man's estate: but this I affirm, that to take the nature of his actions merely from the condition of his person, is hugely absurd; for that can only infer the pardon of his sins upon another account: but surely a sin changes nothing of its nature by this, that in one man it is pardoned, in another not.

This indeed has been eagerly asserted by some; and in this assertion they laid a foundation for all licentiousness; for, according to the tenor of their doctrine, it was but for them first to put on a bold front, and to persuade themselves and others that they were of the number of the converted and the regenerate; and then, whatsoever sins were afterwards committed by them, sunk

to a wonderful low degree of guilt, as being chargeable with no higher than what arises from infirmity. In the strength of this doctrine, some would hold David's murder and adultery to have been only sins of infirmity; though each of them complicated, and made up of so many several base sins, and ripened with such deliberate contrivances, that it is hard to commit, or indeed to imagine, sins of a blacker hue.

But, for a fuller vindication of the truth, I shall, even upon the supposition and grant of this principle, that a regenerate person never so loses his ground by any sin, as to be cut off from his interest in the favour of God and his title to heaven; I shall, I say, yet show the falseness and unreasonableness of the doctrine perversely built upon it; and that by these following arguments.

1st. First; whereas it is said, that persons regenerate sin not with such a plenary and entire consent of will as others; for which cause their sin loses many degrees of its malignity. I demand, whether by this they understand not (as in all reason they must) that such persons find in their conscience a greater reluctancy to be brought to the commission of sin than others? And if so, what is their excuse but a higher aggravation of their sin? that it is committed more against the light and dictates of conscience struggling and contending against it, than the sins of persons wholly unsanctified.

2dly. But in the second place, I demand further, whether this estate of regeneration does not, according to their own supposition, raise the persons so qualified to the privilege of being the sons of God? And if so, I would fain know, whether the unworthy behaviour of a son is not of a more provoking nature than the same deportment from a stranger? A son is capable more of presuming upon his father than a slave or servant upon his master; for one offends only against authority, the other against authority mixed with love, and endeared with the nearest relation. I conclude therefore, that this is so far from degrading a sin to the smallness of an infirmity, that it stamps it ten times a greater presumption than it would be, if committed by another person.

3dly. And lastly, if the sins of persons regenerate must all pass for infirmities, then how comes David here (who surely was not the last or meanest of this number) to pray so earnestly to be kept from sins of presumption? If the nature of his condition secured him from all possibility of falling into them, where was the danger? And if no danger, where was the necessity of praying to be rescued from an impossibility? But it seems David steered his actions by a different divinity, and looked upon this as the most dangerous presumption of all, to call sins of presumption sins of infirmity. And thus much in answer to the first opinion.

(2.) Some derive the nature of sins of infirmity from the matter of them; as that they are committed only in thought or

desire, or sometimes in word; but pass not into outward and gross action.

But this also is most false and pernicious, and directly opens a gate to the encouragement of the vilest impieties. For though it must be granted, that our thoughts and desires, and sometimes our words, are less under command than our outward actions; yet to affirm therefore, that whatsoever is sinfully transacted in these must presently be baptized but an infirmity, is an assertion noways to be endured.

And for answer to it, I affirm,

First, that there is no act producible by the soul of man, that either is or ever was under the power and command of man's will, but is capable of receiving all the poison and guilt that the will (which is itself the fountain of all sin) is able to infuse into it; and consequently of being a sin of presumption. But now both thoughts, words, and desires are controllable by the will, which is able to make the soul cease thinking and desiring of any particular thing by diverting and applying it to other objects. And if the will has now lost some of the absoluteness of its primitive dominion, yet when we come to state the morality of actions, we are to consider the power it had naturally, and in man's innocency, and has since lost by its own fault: but stands therefore no less accountable for it to God, than if it were not lost.

But secondly, let us hear the voice of God in the scriptures concerning this matter. There, I am sure, are loud complaints of the sins of men's thoughts; Isa. lv. 7, "Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts," says God; and Jer. iv. 14, "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" And in Matt. xv. 19, "From the heart," says our Saviour, "proceed evil thoughts, murders, and adulteries." We see here evil thoughts put into the same catalogue with murders and adulteries: and these surely are not sins of infirmity. But above all, take that place in Acts viii. 22, where St. Peter bids Simon Magus "pray to God, if peradventure the thought of his heart might be forgiven him."

And then for desires: we know that in God's account they stand for actions. In Matt. v. 28, Christ calls the unlawful desire of a woman adultery. And God still complained of his people that "their heart went after idols;" and in Psalm lxxviii. 18 it is said of them, that "they tempted God in their heart."

But that evil desires carry so high a guilt with them, is no less evident from mere reason; for if the evil of the thoughts lies under so great a condemnation before God, that of the desires must needs lie under a greater; forasmuch as desire is a further step and advance of the soul into sin; and is indeed the very pulse of the soul naturally showing the temper and inclination of it.

And so much for the second opinion.

(3.) And lastly, the difference of a sin of presumption and of infirmity may be drawn from the principle immediately producing the action; as namely, that the will is carried to the one by malice, to the other by inadvertency. And this is that, that reason will force us to pitch upon. For there is no doubt but an evil choice (the thing here meant by malice) is that which greatens the impiety and guilt of an action into the nature of presumption; which action, done out of a sudden incogitancy, might pass for but a weakness, and so stand rated at a much lower pitch of guilt.

Certain it is therefore, that malice is that that constitutes the nature of presumption, and inadvertency that makes a sin to be but an infirmity. But then, to draw this down *à thesi ad hypothesin*, and to determine the bounds of each, by showing exactly where malice ceases, and where a faultless inadvertency begins; this, I confess, is most difficult, and perhaps, by any one common rule, constantly and universally appliable to every particular action, not to be effected.

But, for our better conduct in a case of such importance, I shall show first, negatively, what is not a sin of infirmity. 2dly, what positively is.

As for the negative part, we are to observe,

1st. That whensoever a man ventures, and designs to commit a sin upon this ground, that he judges it a sin of infirmity; that sin, by such antecedent thought and design beforehand, is changed from a sin of infirmity into a sin of presumption. For though an infirmity be comparatively but a little sin, yet it is far from an infirmity to account any sin little, and much more upon that ground to commit it. Men are apt to say (in their hearts at least), that such or such a thing is no great matter; and therefore, surely, they need not so much scruple the doing of it: but such must know, that this argues a cursed undervaluing of the evil of sin, and a desire to take any advantage to commit it; than which there cannot be a greater proof of a corrupt, rotten, and unsanctified heart.

2dly. That sin, though in itself never so small, that a man after the committing of it, is desirous to excuse or extenuate, by charging it upon surprise, passion, weakness, company, or the like, does by such excuse cease to be an infirmity: for when a man comes to defend his sin, it shows that he has a hearty kindness for it, and dislikes nothing in it but the consequent danger; than which temper of mind few actual sins are more loathsome and provoking in the sight of God.

But in the next place, to pass from negatives, and to show positively, what a sin of infirmity is: I conceive it may not unfitly be defined a sin committed out of mere sudden inadvertency, that inadvertency not being directly caused by any deliberate sin immediately going before it. The reason of this has been given

already, viz., that the consequent actions follow the guilt and nature of the antecedent action that caused them. But for the better clearing of the thing discoursed of to our apprehensions, that I may also give an instance of this kind of sin; I suppose, when a man, being suddenly urged and provoked vehemently, conceives an angry thought or utters a hasty word, that that thought and that word may be reckoned for infirmities. And when an unlawful desire suddenly strikes the mind, but a man's heart immediately smites him for it, so that he presently checks that desire, this also, I conceive, may be reputed a sin of infirmity. But God knows, few sins pass from us thus. Sin is scarce ever acted by us, but with the full force and power of all our faculties. And it is seldom that we do any thing faintly, when it is to dishonour God, or to ruin ourselves.

And thus I have finished the first branch of the first general head; which was to show what it was in general to presume, and wherein the nature of a presumptuous sin did consist.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XI.

PART II.

ON THE NATURE OF PRESUMPTUOUS SINS.

PSALM XIX. 13.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.

2. I COME now to the second, which is to assign some of the most notable kinds of presumptuous sins.

Concerning which I shall premise this in general: That there is no sin committable by man, as to the kind of it, but by circumstances is capable of being made a sin of presumption. Upon which account it would be infinite to set down all the several kinds; and therefore I shall only insist upon some of the greatest remark for their malignity, and such as it most concerns the souls of men to be clear and secure from.

For a man to sin upon hopes or confidence of pardon or mercy, I cannot reckon as a particular kind of presumptuous sin; this being the general nature of presumption running through all the respective kinds and species of it. For he that presumes to offend, promises himself pardon from God's mercy, without any warrant from God's word.

The particular kinds therefore of presumptuous sin, that I shall cull out and insist upon, are these that follow:

(1.) The first is, to sin against the goodness of God, manifesting itself to a man in great prosperity. Every beam of God's favour to a sinner in these outward enjoyments, is a call to repentance upon the stock of ingenuity. And the apostle's expostulation in Rom. ii. 4, lies full against the neglecter of it: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Every breath of air that the sinner takes in, is a respite given him by mercy from sin-revenging justice. Every morsel he eats, and every drop he drinks, is an alms, and a largess, and a repast, that he has no claim to.

But when mercy shall rise higher, and from the benefit of a bare subsistence, serve his convenience, and, what is more, his abundance; when Providence shall make his increase bigger than

his barns, and his incomes to upbraid the narrowness of his coffers; when it shall add a lustre to his person, and at the same time multiply and advance his family; when it shall appoint angels for his guardians, and in a word, set a hedge about all that he has: for such a one to rise up and spurn against his Maker, to make all his plenty and greatness the drudge of his luxury and ambition; so that his sins shall outvie his substance, and the very effects of mercy be made the weapons of unrighteousness; for him therefore to sin because he is great, and rich, and powerful, that is, because Providence has by all this obliged him not to sin; is not this the height of ingratitude, as ingratitude is the height of baseness?

Samuel upbraided David for his two great sins, by recounting what God had done for him, and how openhanded Providence had been to him, in heaping upon him all external blessings, even to the anticipation and exceeding of his desires. "Behold," says the prophet, in the name of God, 2 Sam. xii. 8, "I had given thee such and such things:" and certainly these things are mercies: those, I am sure, that enjoy them, would confess them so in the want of them. For let such a one reflect upon the thousands and the ten thousands of calamitous persons round about him, and tell me a reason why he should stand exempted from the same lot; why Providence should be so fond of him, as to make him swim in pleasure, while others are sinking under their necessities? When he sees this man roaring under pain, that man languishing under sickness, another hauled to prison for poverty and debt, another starving with cold and hunger, let him tell us what obligation he has laid upon God, that he should be healthful in his person, flourishing in his condition, full in his revenues, and sit down to a table, the very scraps of which were a feast for many persons much more holy and virtuous than himself.

But to go a little further: while he is thus provided for (as we have observed) not only as to convenience, but also supplied as to affluence; can he tell me, why he is all this time permitted to live, and to tread the earth? why he is not in hell, roaring in the flames, and bemoaning himself in the regions of the damned? whether his sins have not long since deserved it, and whether both the mercy and justice of God might not be glorified in his destruction? and whether many, whose sins were fewer and smaller than his, have not been cut off from the earth in wrath, and disposed of into that remediless estate of torment? Can he ascribe this reprieve to any thing but to mercy, to mere undeserved mercy, that places the marks of its favour absolutely and irrespectively upon whom it pleases?

But now is there any gross sin, that such a one can commit, that is not a direct defiance to the designs of this mercy? There is not any temporal blessing that a man enjoys, that shall not be

reckoned upon his eternal account. That sentence shall appear fresh and fierce against him, "Son, thou receivedst thy good things." And it is not so much his having sinned that shall condemn him, as his having sinned in pomp, in plenty, and magnificence. His having sinned against the bounties and endearments of Providence; this is that, that shall rank him with those leading sinners, whose portion lies deeper in the bottomless pit than that of ordinary offenders.

(2.) A second sort of presumptuous sins, are sins committed under God's judging and afflicting hand; than which there cannot be a more open and professed declaring of an opposition to God; it being little short of sending a challenge to Heaven. It is a striking of God, while God is striking us; and so, as it were, a contention who should have the last blow. For a child to commit that fault under the rod, for which the rod is upon him, shows an incorrigible disposition, and a malice too great to be chastised into amendment.

What does God send forth his arrows for, and shoot this man with sickness, another with poverty, and a third with shame, but to reclaim and to recover them? to embitter the sweet morsels of sensuality to them, and to knock off their affections from sinful pleasures? For God makes not the miseries of men his recreation; it is no delight to him to hear the groans and the sighs of a distressed person. It can be no diversion to the chirurgeon to hear the shrieks and the cries of him whom he is cutting for the stone; but yet he goes on with his work, for he designs nothing but ease and cure to the person whom he afflicts.

God would make men better by soft and persuasive means, he would "draw them with the cords of a man;" but when these prevail not, he is driven to the use of his whips and scorpions; but if these prove ineffectual too, the man is too great a sinner to be corrected, and consequently to be saved. When a man comes three or four times out of God's furnace with his dross about him, it is a sign of a reprobate and castaway. God complains of the house of Israel, Ezek. xxii. 18, "that they were dross in the midst of the furnace." When the flesh is so proud, that it scorns all the powers of a corrosive, it is an argument that it is incurable, and fit for nothing but to be cut off. God speaks it with a certain pathos and expostulation, and as if he were even brought to a nonplus, Isaiah i. 5, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt still more and more." Some are so obstinately bad and confirmed in their vice, that judgments and afflictions are but thrown away upon them; and God's shooting at them, is but like shooting at a mark, which indeed receives the arrow, but does not at all feel it.

But such persons must know that their sins are rendered infinitely more daring and provoking by the distress of their condition. God throws them upon the ground, and they, instead of

being humbled, rage and rave, and throw the dirt in his face. This is properly a man's "hardening himself against God." The Holy Ghost speaking of a wicked prince of Judah, sets forth the height of his wickedness by this character, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22, "In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz." What a brand does he give him! as if he had said, This is that monster of men, that spot of nature, that prodigy of impiety. It is the property of dogs to snarl under the whip, and to fly in the face of him that strikes them.

There is never an affliction that befalls any man, but it comes with this motto written upon it by the finger of God himself; "Go, sin no more, lest a worst evil come unto thee." Has any man felt the hand of God upon his body, his estate, or his family, or any concernment that is dear unto him? Why let him hear his voice also; his admonishing, his counselling voice. "Sin no more, lest a worse evil happen unto thee." Has God snatched away a man's child? God can snatch away his estate too. Has God taken away his estate? he can take away his friends also. Has he bereaved him of his friends? he can likewise bereave him of his reputation. Has he blasted his reputation? he can proceed to touch him in his health, and with the most miserable of distempers to smite him with madness, frenzy, and distraction. And after all this, God has more ways to plague his rebel creature, than our poor short apprehensions can reach unto.

But now for a man to sin against all this; to laugh at all these warning periods of Heaven; what is it but a kind of waging war with God? Well may every serious person be still putting up this prayer, 'Lord, keep me from this kind of presumption:' for certainly wheresoever it is, it places a man but a finger's breadth from destruction.

(3.) A third sort of presumption is, to commit a sin clearly discovered and directly pointed at by the word of God, either written or preached. The word sometimes meets the sinner with that power and clearness, that his conscience even forces him to cry out, and arraign himself; "This is my sin, and I am that sinner that is preached against." He finds it not in the power of his invention, by any art or evasion, to elude or shift off the charge, it comes so home and close to his condition. It is to his sin, as a looking-glass to his face; it represents it in every shadow, lineament, and proportion: so that the preacher might be even thought to have had a correspondent in the man's breast, and to have held intelligence with his heart: he gives him so exact and particular an account of the several ways, methods, and actings of his sin.

Now for a man to turn his back upon all these bright discoveries of his sin, to commit it, as it were, with the word yet sounding in his ears, and full and quick in his memory; it is like

a man's offending, not only against a law, but a law rubbed up, renewed, and set afresh before men's eyes, by the king's proclamation.

It is but too usual to see some persons, who at church feel their consciences searched and lanced, and the word even lashing their sin over the face; yet presently, like Samson after the Philistines had been upon him, to go out and shake themselves a little, and forthwith become the very same men that they were before. They are as ready for their cups, for their rotten, obscene, and profane discourse, and, in a word, for all kind of lewdness; as if the preacher had not reproved their vice, but produced new arguments to encourage it; and exhorted them to persevere diligently in those blessed paths in which they are sure to have the devil for their leader, and their lust for their companion.

But the word of God will not be baffled and put off so: where it finds no reception, it will be sure to leave a guilt, and no man can despise it securely: the more clearly it informs, being rejected, the more fiercely it condemns. For surely we cannot imagine that the great God of heaven is so cheap in his addresses to men's souls, as, according to his own expressions, "to wait, to rise up early," and "all the day long to stretch forth his hands" to the sons of men, in setting out the nature and danger of sin before them, only that they may have opportunity to show how little these things change and move them: how hardy and obstinate they can be in holding fast their vice, as it were, in spite of Heaven, and maugre all the divine warnings, threats, and admonitions.

This is none of the least degrees of presumption: for supposing that the sinner has not shaken off the first principle of self-preservation; while he ventures and proceeds confidently in a sin marked out for vengeance by the voice of God himself, he must needs question either his truth, that he will not, or his power that he cannot, make good what he says, by punishing as severely as he threatens.

(4.) A fourth sort of presumption is to commit a sin against certain passages of Providence, particularly thwarting, and, as it were, lying cross to the commission of it. God is so merciful to, and careful of some men's souls, that when his words make no impression, he is pleased, in a manner, to put forth his hand, and, by some kind of force, to withhold a man from the perpetration of his intended villany, as by dashing the opportunities of sinning with some unlooked for accident, so that the thread and chain of all his fine contrivances is, for the present, broken.

It were infinite to recount particulars; each man may collect enough from his own observation. The drunkard's merry meetings are put off and defeated by the interposal of emergent unexpected business; the designs of the revengeful person, by

the intervention of company, perhaps by sickness, or some other misfortune disabling him for the execution of his malicious purposes; nay, and sometimes the frustration and disappointment shall be so repeated, and withal so strange, that the sinner's conscience cannot but tell him that the finger of God is in the whole affair, and that the Almighty himself withstands him; in which case, for him still to hold on his wicked design, and to look for new opportunities to bring it to birth; to make fresh attempts, and to try other courses; it argues a man furiously and invincibly set upon offending God, and pursuing the satisfaction of his sin over all those mountains of opposition that Heaven has raised in his way.

Thus we see nothing could withhold Pharaoh and his host from following the Israelites, for in Exod. xiv. 24, 25, it is said first, "that God troubled them;" then that "he took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove heavily;" and lastly, such a terror seized them, that they cried out, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians;" yet nothing could recall Pharaoh, till Moses stretched out his rod upon the sea, and it returned and swallowed up him and his whole army, so that they sunk like lead in the mighty waters.

And then for Balaam, whose story we have in Numbers xxii., his heart was all that time upon the rich enticing offers of the king of Moab; yet how many rubs and repulses did God cast in his way, and with what difficulty did he go after "the wages of unrighteousness;" yet go after them he did, and upon that score stands recorded in scripture for as presumptuous and resolved a sinner as any is mentioned in the sacred story.

Those who break through all those mounds and hinderances that God has laid between them and the gratification of their vice, imitate Balaam's sin, and may expect to inherit his damnation.

(5.) A fifth kind of presumptuous sins are, sins against the inward checks and warnings of conscience about the evil of any course or action. We may call them the checks of conscience, though I doubt not but that sometimes they are the immediate whispers of God's Spirit in the soul; but it matters not much which they are, it coming all to one result; whether God speaks immediately by himself, or by his interpreter, for so is the conscience uttering every thing in the name and authority of God. That there are such inward checks and startings of the soul at the attempt of any great sin is most certain, and I appeal to the mind of every particular person that hears me, whether he has not often found a struggle within himself, and a kind of pull-back from the sin that he has been about to engage in, raising such questions in his heart as Joseph put to himself, "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God," and how shall I answer it at the last day? and, What if I should die before

I repented of it? and may it not for all its present promises of pleasure, be bitterness in the latter end? I know every one (not one excepted) feels something like this within himself: it is a thing of universal experience, and no man can deny it.

Now from whence and for what can all these suggestions be sent into the heart? What is the reason that there is such a kind of thing within us, ready, as it were, to catch us by the arm and to bid us hold our hand when we are putting it forth to the commission of any sin? Surely they are the spiritual engines of God planted by him in the soul to wield it this way and that way, to the prosecution of virtuous, and from the pursuit of vicious courses: they are the characters of every man's duty drawn and engraven upon his heart; they are the expositors and faithful reporters of the mind of God to a man concerning the quality of every action that he is about to do.

And to thwart and trample upon them is to presume upon God to that degree that is called a "resisting of his Spirit." It is to extinguish the eternal light, and to shut our eyes that we may more boldly leap down this dismal precipice into the arms and embraces of our sin. However, such presumers must learn, that he who now warns us from sin in a "still voice," when he comes to reprove and judge for sin will do it in thunder. And there is not one of these inward, gentle (and as they think) inconsiderable movings and endeavours of the conscience against sin, but shall one day come into account, and be reckoned in the catalogue of its aggravations.

So that if we should imagine a sinner pleading the excuse of his sin before God, that he was pushed on to the acting of it by a clamorous furious principle within him, his violent affections, his mouth would quickly be stopped, and all his plea cut off by this one demand: Whether he did not find another principle within him, as much protesting against that sin, as passionately dissuading and drawing him off from it, painting the evil of it before his eyes, and laying the sad consequents of it home to his heart. All this will and must be granted, and therefore he that sins against these inward checks, presumes, and what is more, he presumes inexcusably.

(6.) A sixth sort of presumptuous sins are, sins against that inward taste, relish, and complacency that men have found in their attempts to walk with God, and comply with the precepts of the gospel. The former are sins against the sight, these against the taste of God's favour. For the explication of which, we must observe that some persons, wrought up and warmed by the word into good resolutions, set forth for heaven, and intend with themselves a dereliction of the world, and a living up to those divine rules of piety taught and proposed by the Saviour of the world, the great instructor of souls. Hereupon, by reason of

the native suitableness of those excellent things taught by him to the generous principles of virtue, naturally planted in every mind, a man, upon the least compliance with them, finds a strange exalting pleasure and satisfaction arising from thence, much superior to all the poor delights of sensuality. This is called in Matt. xiii. 20, a "receiving the word with joy:" and it is said of Herod in Mark vi. 20, that "upon the Baptist's preaching he did many things, and heard him gladly:" and there is mention of some in Heb. vi. 4, that had "tasted of the heavenly gift."

Now this is that relish and inward complacency that I spoke of, and which I said might be sinned against. For I doubt not but God gratifies new beginners in the ways of piety with certain strictures and tastes of spiritual pleasure, in vain to be sought for any where else: they are transient discoveries of himself; the very glimpses of heaven, and drops of an overflowing bounty.

And I doubt not also but many, who have been admitted to a participation and experience of these privileges, have yet, through the force of temptation, the entanglements of the flesh, and the deceitfulness of their own hearts, been so far turned aside as to have all these impressions worn off their minds, and in the issue prove wretched apostates. For these are not the peculiar mercies of the elect, who are loved with an everlasting love, but kindness of a lower degree. God may drop such manna upon those that shall never enter into Canaan; many, like Moses, may have a short view of that which they shall never enjoy.

But this is that that we drive at, that every apostasy and sinful backsliding after the soul has been thus treated by God, is thereby inflamed to the nature of a great unkindness and a vast presumption. For can a man do any thing more heinous than this? After God has met him in his prayers, embraced him in sacraments, and given him hope of the pardon of his sins; after all this to turn rebel; to hear the Baptist gladly, and within a while to behead him? Can there be a viler and blacker presumption? He that only has a cordial by him, and balks the use of it, dies without remedy; but he that also tastes it, and then spits it out again, dies without pity.

And let this be observed, that if such persons who, like Agrippa, were almost Christians, and have been, as it were, in the skirts and out-courts of heaven, chance to apostatize finally and to perish, the consideration of this will make the worm of conscience bite much more terribly, and the everlasting flame burn ten times more violently, than if they had gone to hell, at the common rate of sinning, with such as never thought of any other God but their belly, nor any religion beside their sensuality.

(7.) The seventh and last sort of presumptuous sins that I shall mention is, the returning to, and repeated commission of

the same sin: which surely is the greatest demonstration of a bold, stiff, resolved sinner that can be. Flies are accounted bold creatures, and that for a very good reason; for drive them off from a place as often as you will, yet presently they will be there again. It is not a thing so clear, but it has been disputed by divines, whether a relapse into the same sin, if a gross one, be pardonable. There is great cause to conclude that it may and is: the contrary assertion being a limitation of mercy, where the word sets no limits to it: yet surely the case is dangerous, and those two things may be very well consistent, that a disease is curable, and yet not one of five hundred ever cured of it.

And if one, of so many sinning presumptuously in this nature, has been, by the singular grace of God, recovered, and in the end saved, I should think it would be but a small encouragement to any, to presume that he shall be the one picked out of so great a number. David presumed upon the goodness and justice of God broadly and foully enough in those his two great sins; and so did Peter in denying his master. But we read of no more murders or adulteries in David, or denials of Christ in Peter: and God knows, if there had, what would have been the issue of such a presumption in either of them?

This is a sinning against the common methods of nature, as well as the obligations of grace. For it is natural to all men, nay, even to most brute animals, to avoid that thing or place where they have met with some notable mischief or disaster. There is a lasting horror of it imprinted upon the spirits, that presently works and shows itself upon the sight of the hurtful thing. Some stomachs never can abide a liquor or meat wonderfully grateful to them before, after they have had some loathsome physic conveyed to them in it. Now there can no reason be assigned why men should not be thus affected also as to spirituals.

A man commits a gross sin, and by it makes a great breach upon the peace of his conscience, loses all present sense and feeling of the favour of God, and perhaps, over and above, finds some outward fierce expressions of his wrath in the discomposure of his worldly affairs, so that both within and without, the man is distempered and disordered, and infinitely at a loss how to resettle himself in his former calm condition. But at length, by divine favour, he does regain his former ground: and, perhaps, within a while, his former sin also presents itself to him with fresh enticements and little renowned arts of persuasion. What will the man do now? Will he let the old stale cheat new-dressed be acted over upon him the second time? Will he venture the loss of God's favour once more, and try whether his pardoning mercy will hold out as long as he is pleased to abuse it? Will he have his conscience about his ears again, and break his leg, because once by much pain and misery he got it set in the like case?

If he does, let him know that he is incorrigibly presumptuous, he "crucifies the Son of God afresh," is a professed despiser of mercy, and by this daring return to his former sin, that had so fearfully mauled and shattered him, has, to say no more, put his repentance, his recovery and salvation under a very great improbability. And thus much for the second branch of the first general head, which was, to assign some of the most notable kinds of presumption.

SERMON XII.

PART III.

ON THE DANGER OF PRESUMPTUOUS SINS.

Psalm xix. 13.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me.

The prosecution of these words was first disposed under these two general heads.

I. To show what these presumptuous sins were.

II. To show the reason of this so excellent and holy person, the psalmist's, so earnest praying against them.

The first of these I proposed to be handled under these three particulars.

1. To show what it was in general to presume.

2. To show and assign some of the most remarkable kinds of presumption.

3. To propose some remedies against these sins.

The first two of which being despatched, I proceed now to

3. The third and last. The grand and general remedy against presumptuous sins surely must be to arm the understanding, and to check the exorbitance of the will by consideration: for the employment of which, with matter in reference to the sins we are treating of, these three things offer themselves to be considered.

(1.) Let a man endeavour to fix in his heart a deep apprehension and persuasion of the transcendent evil of the nature of sin in general: which is no less than a direct affront to our Creator and Governor in a breach of that law that he values as a transcript of his own holiness, and enforces by the penalty of eternal death threatened to the violators and transgressors of the least iota of it. The foundation of men's apostasy from God, seems to be laid in the undervaluing thoughts they have of sin. It is but as a mote in their eye, not for any trouble that it gives them, but for their opinion of its smallness. The easiness of the commission of it, hides the monstrous greatness of the provocation; and men can sport away a soul so quickly and so easily, that they can scarce be brought to think themselves any poorer for the loss.

But since it is difficult to view the nature of a thing imme-

diately in itself, let men read the nature of sin in the dismal history of the effects and consequents of it. And for this, let them first see the ruin of a whole species, and the fall, not of man only, but of mankind effected by it. Let them view Adam tumbled out of paradise, embased in his nature, and cursed in his actions, with a perpetual toil and misery entailed upon his descending posterity. Let them also see a deluge breaking in upon the earth, and the whole world lying under the destroying element, and they shall find that it was sin that opened the sluices of heaven, and brake up the fountains of the great deep. Sin was the thing that made God almost unravel the works of a whole creation, and deface the draughts of his own hand.

He that shall read the several captivities, bondages, dispersions, and massacres of the Israelites, reads so many comments upon sins, so many lively descriptions of the destructive force of a mighty guilt. But he that would bring the matter to a compendium, and see all in one, let him see the only Son of God fetched out of the bosom of his Father to bleed, and suffer, and die upon the cross; that is, to die a vile, cursed, ignominious death. Let him see his very Father his executioner, and preparing him a cup full of the dregs of an infinite, flaming fury, to be drunk off by him. And all this, not for any personal sin of his own, but for the sins of others, taken upon himself merely by imputation: so that being found under this, neither the dignity nor innocence of his person could secure it against the nails and the spear, the scoffs and the flouts, the gall and the vinegar, that our sins had prepared and infused for him.

And lastly, to add a later, since there can be no greater instance of the malignity of sin: when we shall have the fabric of this beautiful frame of all things fired and torn down about us, the elements melting with fervent heat, and the heavens passing away with a noise: when the universe shall be reduced to its first principles, and time shall be no more; when the judgment shall be set and the books opened; then we shall understand that it was sin that made all these desolations, that kindled these fires, and will be yet kindling much greater.

Now let a sinner consider all these passages, and when he has considered them, let him know that there is unspeakably more evil in sin than in all these. For God can destroy and confound a world, but he cannot sin; and Christ could submit to all the violences of cruelty, all the loads of contumely, but he who could do all this could not be brought to commit the least sin.

Nor is this to be wondered at; for as every quality flows much more plentifully in the cause than in the effect: so sin, that causes and produces all these evils, must needs contain a much more redundant evil in itself. But now after all this, the presuming sinner must yet further consider, that all the evil he has hitherto heard of, is but the evil of sin, considered barely as

sin: and then let him collect, that presumption is the very poison and gall of sin itself, the highest degree of it. Sin then reigns and sits in its throne, when it is once advanced to the nature of being presumptuous: so that presumption is a sin (if it were possible) something more than sinful.

(2.) Let a man most seriously consider and reflect upon God's justice. The hands of justice are not so tied up by mercy, but that they are loose enough upon those who have no title to mercy: and such the greatest part of the world are, who may possibly, by a redundant bounty, enjoy, but they cannot claim it; for, as God deals with men upon a double account, either of the gospel, or of the law, the tenor of the former of which is, that "there is no condemnation to such as are in Christ Jesus;" that is, to such as believe and repent, and become new creatures; and the tenor and voice of the latter is, "Cursed be every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them;" so these two dispensations divide and comprehend all mankind; whereupon those who are not under one are certainly ranged under the other. Those who have not by sincere repentance, and the fruits of it, reached the conditions of the gospel, are under the lash and dint of the law. In the execution of whose sentence the divine justice reigns and shows itself, as the other is the proper scene of mercy.

But now, while a sinner presumes and sins confidently, upon what grounds of certainty, or indeed of rational probability, can he conclude himself to be within the verge and compass of the second covenant? There is not a greater and a more dangerous symptom of a person wholly estranged from all right to the evangelical privileges. For none can be entitled to these but the penitent; and can any man evidence his penitence by his presumption? his sorrow for sin by a resolved progress and continuance in it? And if he can make out no title here, let him consider, and tremble under the consideration, that he lives every minute obnoxious to the arrests of that fierce attribute of God, his justice: he is absolutely under the power of the law; that law that cries for wrath and revenge upon the violators of it.

So that, as presumptuous, he is the proper object for wrath and justice to discharge itself upon. Mercy indeed wards off all these dreadful blows, but it does not this universally and promiscuously for all, but for those only, who by certain conditions are qualified for the proper subjects of mercy, as others are of justice. Where we may observe, that each of these attributes confine their working within their proper object, and encroach not upon the respective bounds of each other. He that is a vessel of mercy, is out of the reach of justice; and he whom the law consigns over to justice, so long can have no protection from mercy.

The impartial thought of which, surely, should be sufficient to disabuse the confidence of the presumptuous, and to rectify his wild, unlimited apprehensions of that pardoning grace, which speaks pardon to none while they presume upon it.

(3.) Let a man correct his presumptuous humour, by considering how much such offences would exasperate even men. It is well if some men can pardon once. But when they see that an offender grows upon them, takes heart, and reiterates the provocation over and over, their patience is out of breath, tires, and can hold out no longer. Peter thought, according to the rate of the world's pardoning, that he extended charity to a vast compass, when he discoursed of pardoning his brother seven times. He thought that then surely the acts of pardon were in their number of perfection.

No man of spirit will endure that his clemency should prostitute his honour, to the saucy invasions of a bold and a growing impudence. No father will endure that his son should abuse his goodness, as if it served for nothing else but only to suffer and forgive. And this is a thing so known to men, so implanted in them by nature, that such as have not wholly shaken off all modesty, dread the very sight of a man whom they have much presumed upon: and though they fear no punishment from him, yet they find those rejolts from humanity, that deject their countenance, and make them sneak, and fly the presence of an affronted person.

Which being so, has not every presumptuous sinner reason thus to school and upbraid himself?—Shall I fear to deal thus and thus with a man, a sinful man like myself? a worm, a piece of living dirt? one whose breath and life are in his nostrils? And shall I venture to pass the same and greater affronts upon the omnipotent Creator of the world, that can crush me to nothing, that can frown me into hell, and even look me into endless destruction? Shall I fear an anger that lasts but a moment, and can do but little while it lasts? an anger that is but as the spleen of a wasp, a short fester, and huff of passion: and shall I provoke such a displeasure as the very angels tremble at; a displeasure that for its duration is eternal, and for its weight intolerable?

Men see and converse with that every day, in the ordinary passages of common life, that might invincibly argue them into a better behaviour towards their Maker. Could we but treat God as a king, as a magistrate, or a master; of all sins, those of presumption would be the fewest. For in the courts of men people seldom expect to be pardoned the second time. But as for God, his mercy, they say, is infinite, and therefore they resolve that their rebellions shall be so too; since there is no exhausting, no coming to the bottom of an infinite: and thus they presume to be pardoned so often, that, in the issue, they fall short of being pardoned once.

And thus much for the third and last branch of the first general head; which was to prescribe remedies against sins of presumption.

II. I proceed now to the other general head proposed at first, for the handling of the words: which is to show *the reason of this holy and excellent person's (the psalmist's) so earnest praying against these sins.*

I suppose the prosecution of the first head, which was to declare to us what presumptuous sins were, might be argument enough to declare to us the second also, in showing the cause why the psalmist so fervently prays against them. He prays against them, as against so many pests; so many direful causes of God's wrath; so many devourers of souls; and every prayer made against such things, carries its reason too visibly writ upon it, to be long inquired after.

But yet for a more full and explicit discussion of the point in hand, I shall endeavour to give some more particular account of the reasons inducing this holy person, with so much zeal, to engage his prayers against presumptuous sins. And I conceive the principal of them may be brought under these two heads.

1. The danger of falling into these sins. 2. The sad consequences of them, if fallen into.

And first for the danger of falling into them: this appears in several respects.

1. In respect of the nature of man, which is generally apt to be confident, and to measure its belief by its desires; still presaging the best, flattering itself, and building broad superstructures upon narrow foundations. Few men feel their conditions so bad, but they find room for hope: and that which is hope in some cases, will rise into arrogance and presumption in others.

Most men are of a debonair, sanguine, jolly disposition, which never fails to supply those builders with materials, who are apt to rear castles in the air: so that we may well avouch, that where despair has slain its thousands, presumption has slain its ten thousands.

For despair seldom breeds but in the melancholy temper, that inclines men to be thoughtful and suspicious; or in such breasts, as have been forced into a preternatural melancholy by conversing with unskilful spiritual guides, of an indiscreet severity, and pinning their faith upon ill managed discourses about predestination. But these are but a very small portion of mankind, in comparison of the other: these go in handfulls, the other in herds, thronging into the broad way, where mirth and confidence carry them, hoping and laughing into perdition. Let this, therefore, be the first reason of the danger of men's falling into presumptuous sins.

2. The second reason is from the object of presumption, God's

mercy: which, though I show was limited and not as boundless and absurd as some men's imaginations; yet there is no doubt but, according to the present economy of God's actings, the exercise of it is of much more latitude and extent than the exercise of his justice. The time of this life is a time of mercy, and God delights to make the experiments of it splendid and illustrious.

Hereupon presumption strikes in, and advances it into endless and irrational; and uses it not only as an argument for repenting of past sins (the sole proper use of it) but as an antecedent inducement to warrant sin for the future. The largeness of mercy has made it apt to be abused by the corruption of man's heart, which is ready to suck poison out of the fairest flowers of God's garden; and to make the most amiable of his attributes serve the interest of its vilest affections.

Let both law and gospel denounce death against the commission of such or such a sin; and presumption shall interpose and tell the sinner in the devil's own words, "Thou shalt not surely die;" and then mercy shall be alleged for a proof of this assertion: that shall be brought for an encouragement, that God intended only for a cure of sin.

3. Thirdly and lastly. A third reason of the danger of falling into presumptuous sins, is from the tempter, who chiefly busies and concerns himself to engage men in this kind of sin. It is said of David, concerning his sin in numbering the people, which put the sword in the hand of the destroying angel, to give his whole kingdom such a blow, "that Satan stood up and provoked David to number Israel," 1 Chron. xxi. 1. And of Judas it is most particularly remarked, in Luke xxii. 3, "that Satan entered into Judas:" and so by a kind of immediate possession, acted him to the betraying of his master. And for Ananias, who prevaricated about the price of his lands, and so endeavoured, as it were, to put a trick upon the Spirit of God, the apostle Peter tells him in Acts v. 3, "that it was Satan that filled his heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost." Nay, and in that notable temptation in which he accosted our Saviour himself, the sin he drove at was a high presumption, namely, that Christ should cast himself headlong from a pinnacle of the temple; "because God had charged his angels to keep him in all his ways;" that is, that he should presume to promise himself the divine protection in an action wholly uncommanded, and consequently unwarranted, because God had engaged to secure and guard him in the commanded instances of duty and obedience.

It is clear therefore, that the devil lays a more than ordinary stress upon this; and if so, he will be sure to employ all his engines to push his design forward; for he knows that one great sin does his work compendiously, and destroys at a blow. He knows also, that his design, like a two-edged sword, may chance

to cut both ways. For first he will make a man presume to commit a sin, and then, if possible, he will make him despair for having committed it. Wherefore, if all the arts and stratagems of our mortal enemy can endanger us, we are in danger of being entangled in this sin; this fatal, destructive sin, which is the very masterpiece of the devil, and the gate of hell; and consequently have cause, with bended knees and bowed hearts, night and day to invoke the almighty assistances of heaven for our rescue from that sin; in the commission of which every man so really proves the murderer of his own soul.

And thus much for the first reason of David's so earnestly praying against presumptuous sins, namely, the danger of falling into them: as also the several causes from whence that danger does arise.

2. I proceed now to the other reason, which is, the sad consequences of those sins if once fallen into: amongst which we may reckon these that follow.

(1.) This kind of sin is marvellously apt to grow and prevail upon him that gives way to it; which ill consequence of it is deservedly mentioned by me in the first place, it being that great and only one that David mentions instead of all the rest: "Keep," says he, "thy servant from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me." Every presumption is properly an encroachment, and all encroachment carries in it still a further and a further invasion upon the person encroached upon. It enters into the soul as a gangrene does into the body, which spreads as well as infects, and, with a running progress, carries a venom and a contagion over all the members. Presumption never stops in its first attempt. If Cæsar comes once to pass Rubicon, he will be sure to march further on, even till he enters the very bowels of Rome, and breaks open the capitol itself. He that wades so far as to wet and foul himself, cares not how much he trashes further.

When the tenderness of the soul is lost, and its first awe of God and religion broken by a bold sin, it grows venturous, and ready to throw itself upon all sorts of outrages and enormities. It does not demur and tremble as it used to do, when any thing gross and foul was proposed to it, but it closes with it readily, and steps undauntedly into that stream that is like to carry it away, and swallow it up for ever.

This growing encroaching mischief perhaps first fastens but upon the thoughts, and they take the liberty to settle upon some unlawful base thing, like flies upon a carcass; from these it advances a step further, and seizes the desires, which presently are carried out with a restless eagerness after the same vile object; and these at length meet with some friendly opportunity, by the help of which they break forth into actual commission, which actual commission grows from one into many, and comes to be

frequent and repeated, till it settles into a custom, and fixes itself immoveably and for ever in a man's behaviour.

This is the nature and quality of presumption; much like what our Saviour says of the mustard seed, which at first is the least of all seeds, but being grown up, is greater than all herbs, so that the birds of the air lodge in the branches of it. In like manner presumption first sows itself in a thought, the least of all sins for the matter of it; but from thence shooting up into a custom and an habitual practice, it grows mighty and wide, opens its arms, and spreads out its branches for every unclean bird, every sinful action and abomination to come and lodge and rest upon.

No man can assign the limits, the *ne plus ultra* of presumption, where it will stay, and with what pitch of villany it will be contented: it is as unruly as power, as boundless as rebellion; and therefore, he that would preserve his conscience, and the peace of it, has cause to keep a perpetual guard upon his heart, to stave it off from a first admission.

(2.) The second ill consequence of presumptuous sins is, that of all others they prove the most difficult in their cure, forasmuch as they take away that which is the proper disposition to it, tenderness of conscience; leaving the heart fixed and hardened, and not easily capable of any healing impression. It is impossible for any man to be brought off from sin, but by the sense and feeling of sin: which sense, every presumption does by degrees weaken and dull, and in the issue utterly extinguish.

For I show before, that the proper effect of such sins was custom in sinning; and with what difficulty that is removed we are told in Jer. xiii. 23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The Ethiopian's blackness and the leopard's spots are natural to them; and there is no washing away nature, no purging off the essential properties of things; and therefore this is mentioned as a difficulty but one remove from an impossibility.

Custom and frequency in sin breeds a familiarity with it that produces an affection to it, and ends in a resolved continuance in it. And as it is said by the apostle upon another occasion, "that perfect love casts out fear:" so, where custom has fastened a man's love upon sin, the awe and the dread of it vanishes; and the sinner can break a precept under the very eye of sin-revenging justice, without trembling; without feeling any inward wound or blow upon his heart: which is a frame of spirit leaving a man not far from a reprobate mind and a seared conscience; a disease that laughs at all the applications of the spiritual physician; Jer. li. 9, "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed." And the truth is, he who comes recovered out of a course of presumptuous sinning, has plucked his foot out of a mortal snare, a

deliverance never vouchsafed but to the favourites of mercy, supplying the defect and weakness of the means by an invincible grace. And we may say of such a one very properly, as of a man rising from a swoon, and the very neighbourhoods of death, that he is come to himself.

(3.) As sins of presumption are more difficultly cured, so they waste the conscience infinitely more than any other sins. As really as blows and wounds and bruises weaken the body, and by degrees dispose it to its final dissolution; so certainly do some sins shake, and batter, and tear down the constitution of the soul. Guilt upon the conscience, like rust upon iron, both defiles and consumes it, by degrees gnawing and creeping into it, as that does; till at length it has eat out the very heart and substance of the metal. The inward as well as the outward man has his proper health, strength, and soundness naturally belonging to him; and in proportion, has also his diseases and distemper, arising from an irregular course of living. And every act of presumption is to him as a spiritual debauch or surfeit: things that bring a present disorder, and entail a future decay upon nature.

David was a sufficient example of this, who complained in Psalm xxxviii. "that there was neither soundness in his flesh, nor rest in his bones, by reason of his sin:" and that his wounds even festered and grew noisome "because of his foolishness, so that he became as a man in whom there was no strength." He lost that vigorous, athletic habit of soul which before made him eminent and mighty in the ways of God; and now he began to droop and languish like a man that had drank a poisonous draught, that ever after wasted and consumed his spirits; so that in Psalm xxxix. and the last verse, he prays to God "to spare him a little, that he might recover strength, before he went hence and was seen no more." He that would see what desperate stabs and gashes the guilt of presumptuous sinning gives the conscience, should do well to acquaint himself with the case of David, as he himself (dolefully enough) expresses it all along in his Psalms; and if that does not warn him of his danger, he is like to learn it too late by the woful instructions of smart and experience.

(4.) Fourthly and lastly. These sins have been always followed by God with greater and fiercer judgments than any others; and for this also we need go no further than David for an eminent instance and demonstration: for after those two horrid sins committed by him, did not God raise up a rebel against him, not only out of his own house, but also out of his own loins? one that defied him both in the relation of a father and of a king, that trampled upon his authority, and abused his wives in the face of all Israel? Did not God also punish his adultery with an infamous lewd action in his family? his son committing incest with his own sister? and moreover "the sword was never to depart from his house." To all which may be added the ignominy, the

scoffs and reproaches that were in whole vollies discharged at him from all sides: hard usage for majesty and sovereignty to be treated with: yet by all this, God was pleased to give him some taste of the poison of his presumptions.

And to proceed to other instances: did not the villany and lewdness of a few Benjamites, set and resolved upon their sin against all admonition, almost consume and reap down a whole tribe? Did not the violence and uncleanness of Hophni and Phinehas bring a disaster and a defeat upon the armies of Israel? and withal perpetuate a hideous destructive curse upon their father's house? Did not the apostasy and ingratitude of Solomon against that God that made him shine like a star of the first magnitude amongst all the neighbouring princes, rend away ten tribes from his son at once?

But above all, take that notable instance of Manasses, whose sins indeed were of that high strain, that they seemed to surpass all those of the kings of Israel and Judah, that were either before or after him; yet notwithstanding this, both he himself proved a penitent and a convert at the last; and as for his son and successor Josiah, he was as eminently transcendent for his piety, as his father had been for his sin: and extended reformation every way as large and wide as the former's corruption. So that one would have imagined that he had cleansed the land, and even atoned his father's abominations: whereupon, the Spirit of God gives him this bright and glorious character, 2 Kings xxiii. 25, 26, "that like unto Josiah there was no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses, neither afterwards arose any like unto him." And now what follows after all this? Why in the next verse, "Notwithstanding this, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasses had provoked him withal." Josiah's goodness could not expiate Manasses' sin. The son's penitential tears could not wash away the father's guilt.

And now, for the sinner that we have been hitherto discoursing of; if all the former considerations will not move him, yet let him at least arrest his presumption with this last. Perhaps the growing, contagious nature of his sin moves him not; the difficult cure of it peradventure prevails upon him as little: and it is like, that its aptness to waste, and harden, and debauch the conscience may make but small impression upon him; yet, shall not the effects of it, the confusion, the disaster, and the curse that it is big with, the curse that will descend like a rottenness into his bones, and strike like a dart through his liver; shall not all this terrify him into caution and prayer, into reformation and amendment?

It is the concernment of God's justice and his honour, to meet

and confound an audacious sinner in his course with some remarkable instance of his vengeance. It is a clearing of his providence to the rational world. Men surely have cause to pray against the commission of that sin, which if once committed, may leave a guilt that no repentance can so wipe off as to discharge the sinner wholly from all punishment in this world. God, upon the intercession of Moses, was reconciled to the Israelites after their making of the golden calf; yet the pardon was mingled with a bitter allay: Exod. xxxii. 34, "Nevertheless," saith God, "in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them." And it was a usual saying of the Jewish rabbies, that there was no affliction or judgment that ever befell the children of Israel but had an ounce of the golden calf in it.

And no sinner can assure himself but that, after all his prayers, and tears, and humiliations, nay, and what is more, his reconcilement with God, as to his eternal estate, yet, as to his temporal, the anger of the same God may, for the guilt of some gross, presumptuous sin, stick in his skirts, and never cease to pursue and dog him to the grave, sealing his offence with that dreadful sentence in Isaiah xxii. 14, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die." Which sentence as every presumption will deserve, so it is only in his power that pronounces it to prevent.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

THE MOST SECRET ACTIONS KNOWN TO GOD.

Psalm cxxxix. 3.

Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

In this psalm David endeavours to possess himself with a holy admiration of the excellency of God's knowledge, which is one of those divine perfections which we call attributes; all of which, though they are so many expressions of God condescending to our capacities, yet they are so exceeding glorious in themselves, that when we study to search them out, we must needs conclude, that they are objects much fitter for our admiration than our understanding. And one of the greatest of these is that which we are now about, to wit, God's knowledge.

It is such a knowledge as sees and comprehends all things, but is comprehended by none; and the best of human knowledge is so far from equalling of it, that it is its greatest perfection to be able to express it. But when we have said all concerning it that we can, when we have spent our inventions and our words, we must sit down and confess with David, that "such knowledge is too wonderful for us;" since our highest and most devout expressions of God, rather testify our reverential desires of honouring him, than at all express his nature. Now the knowledge of God is chiefly wonderful in respect of the extent and latitude of its object, as it takes in all things knowable. But here the prophet considers it in a more restrained sense, as it is conversant about the secret and hidden things of man, and in this respect it is admirable. It was no small testimony of the divinity of our Saviour's knowledge, "that he knew what was in man, and needed not that any one should tell him," John ii. 25. Certainly none can find out those many windings and turnings, those strange intricacies of the mind, but the great artificer that framed them. From the 1st verse to the 17th, we have many rare, full, and elegant expressions setting forth God's accurate discernment of the most hidden contrivances of men; who, by one cast of his eye, looks through the whole scene of our lives. Whether rising up or lying down; waking or discoursing; thinking, yea, before we think: yet unborn and enclosed in the womb, he clearly sees and beholds us. The words that I have read unto you seem to be a metaphor, taken from soldiers surrounding the ways with an

ambush, or placing scouts and spies in every corner, to discover the enemy in his march: thou "compassest my path;" thou hast, as it were, thy spies over me, wheresoever I go. By "path," is meant the outward actions and carriage of his ordinary conversation. By "lying down" is signified to us the private and close actions of his life: such as were attended only by darkness and solitude. In Psalm xxxvi. 4, it is said of the wicked, "that he deviseth mischief upon his bed," to denote not only his perverse diligence, but also his secresy in it: and God is said to "hide his children in the secret of his pavilion." So that these places of "rest" and "lying down," are designed for secresy and withdrawing. When a man retires into his chamber, he does, in a manner, for a while, shut himself out of the world. And that this is the fine sense of that expression of "lying down," appears from the next words, "Thou art acquainted with all my ways;" where he collects in one word, what he had before said in two; or it may come in by way of inference and deduction from the former. As if he should say, Thou knowest what I do in my ordinary converse with men, and also how I behave myself when I am retired from them, therefore thou knowest also all my actions, since a man's actions may be reduced either to his public or private deportment. By the other expression of "my ways" is here meant the total of a man's behaviour before God, whether in thoughts, words, or deeds, as is manifest by comparing this with other verses. In the 2nd verse it is said, "Thou understandest my thought afar off," and in the fourth verse it is said, "There is not a word in my mouth, but thou knowest it altogether." And thus we see, that it was David's scope to show that the most dark counsels of men are exposed to God's view, and this he does by a distinct enumeration of all the particulars, "thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising; thou understandest my thoughts; thou compassest my path and my lying down; there is not a word in my mouth but thou knowest it; thou hast beset me before and behind; thou coverest me in my mother's womb, and seest my substance being yet imperfect." He might have comprised all this in short, as in some such like expression, Lord, there is nothing in the life of man so concealed, but it is open and manifest to thy discernment. But he chose rather to dilate himself; because a distinct and particular mention of each several passage shows not only God's bare knowledge, but also his observance of these things. From hence, therefore, I shall gather this doctrinal observation, viz.

That God knows and takes strict and accurate notice of the most secret and retired passages of a man's life.

In the prosecution of this doctrine, I shall only prove it by some reasons, and afterwards make application, which I chiefly intend. The reasons shall be of two sorts.

I. Such as prove that it is so, that God knows the most secret passages of our lives.

II. Such as show whence it is, that he takes such notice of them.

I. The first reason proving that *God does observe the secret passages of man's life* is, because he rules and governs them. Government is such a thing as requires the highest and most perfect endowments of knowledge: the very wheel and hinge even of human government is intelligence. Can a man, deprived of his sight, manage a chariot through by and dark ways with a steady hand? Can God, that carries the rule of all things in so constant and fixed a course, and yet not observe those things? Certainly he could not govern the world by his power, unless he governed his power by his knowledge. In Ezek. i. 18, God's providence in the administration of all things here below is expressed by a wheel full of eyes, to signify God's quick-sighted knowledge in his government, and to express also, that those eyes were always in motion.

The Spirit of God attributes the like knowledge to Christ in his providential ruling the church, Zech. iii. 9, "Upon one stone shall be seven eyes." By "the stone" is here meant Christ, to whom is ascribed perfect knowledge; by "eyes" is signified knowledge, and the number denotes perfection. Now there are three ways by which God governs the most secret projects of man, to all of which there is required a distinct knowledge.

1. He governs them by discovering of them. Now how is it possible for any one to make that known to another which he does not know himself? God prudently overrules most plots, by a seasonable revealment of them, as the sun may he said to "rule the day," as it is in Gen. i. 16, because of his universal sight, by which he discovers all things. In Matt. ii. 13, God disappointed Herod's design of killing Christ, by making it known to Joseph: and God made ineffectual the treacherous intentions of the men of Keilah, in delivering David to Saul, 1 Sam. xxiii. 12, by discovering to David what they intended against him: wherefore it must needs follow, that since God makes hidden things open to men, they must of necessity be much more open and manifest to himself.

2. He governs the most secret intentions by preventing of them. For assuredly, if God should permit all the sin that men conceive in their thoughts to break forth into action, the world would not be able to continue, by reason of the overflowing sinfulness of men. God does therefore prevent and hinder it, and as it were stifles it in the very birth. Now to be able to prevent an evil, argues a clear knowledge of its approach. How many secret villanies, thought of, and intended, and even ready for execution, have been turned aside by God's interposing providence!

In Gen. xx. 6, God says of Abimelech, that "he withheld him from sinning against him, and suffered him not to touch Sarah." Adultery, in all likelihood, would have followed, had not God stepped in between the intentions and commission of it; and does not this argue God to be a strict discerner of our most private actions? Wisely to prevent, is an act of the highest prudence and experience: that watchman must have his eyes open that discerns an enemy coming while he is yet afar off.

3. God governs the secret designs of men, by directing them to other ends than for which they were intended. Man may resolve, but God often secretly blows upon his counsels, and scatters all his resolutions. In vain do the Syrians take counsel to invade Judah, when God says in Isaiah vii. 7, "It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." If God can turn the designs of men which way soever he pleases, he cannot but also see and observe them. To be able to divert a river in the midst of its most violent course from its native channel, shows more than ordinary skill. When a sinner in the full career of his intentions is rushing into sin, like a horse into the battle, then for God to wind him to his own purposes, it shows him to be of an infinite wisdom, and withal to have his eye continually fixed upon that man's ways. How privately did Joseph's brethren carry on their plot against him, with an evil and malicious intent: yet God observes their treachery; and what they intended for his misery, God turns to be a miraculous means of their own preservation, Gen. xlv. 5. And thus did Judas plot in secret with the rulers of the Jews to betray his master; God sees his design, and withal orders the most cursed intention that ever was to the best and most glorious end: most excellent therefore must the knowledge of God be, that describes the most hidden sinful actions of men, so as to manage them contrary to their natural tendency: the sinner shoots the arrow, but God takes the aim, and directs it to his own marks. Let a man sin as secretly as he can, yet he shall not be able to avoid God's knowledge, nor to contradict his will; I mean his efficacious and hidden will; which, by a secret influence, controls all actions, even the most wicked, to the glory of God. From hence we may be assured, that God is both privy to, and observant of our most concealed iniquities, since he is able to see further into them, than the sinner himself that commits them. And thus much concerning the first reason, proving that God observes the most secret passages of our lives, because he governs them, and that both by discovering, by preventing, and by directing them to his own ends.

The second reason proving the same is, because he gives laws to regulate the most secret passages of our lives, and therefore he must needs know and observe them. It is absurd for any governor to impose laws upon men in respect of those actions which cannot come under his knowledge. Hereupon all human

laws tend only to the regulation of the outward man, and proceed no further. But God extends his law to the most secret behaviour of men, even to the thoughts. Hence our Saviour interprets the lust of the heart, and the first motions thereof to uncleanness, to be adultery, Matt. v. 28. Hence also the word, or law, of God, is said, in Heb. iv. 12, "to be quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And in Heb. iii. 12, the Spirit of God commands them not to entertain "an evil heart of unbelief," nor so much as in their desires "to depart from the living God." If God took no notice of secret unbelief, if he did not know or regard all the private excursions of the mind to sin, it were vain and fruitless to limit them by a law. But since he has set a law even to these also; since he does not only restrain our secret actions, but even our thoughts and desires, we may very well collect that all these are in his view, that he evidently beholds and searches them out, and that his knowledge is not shorter than his commands.

The third reason is, because he will judge the most secret passages of our lives, therefore they are manifest to him. Knowledge is so requisite to judgment, that our earthly judges cannot judge rightly in matters that they do not know: hence Job, to show how uprightly he judged, said that "he searched out the cause that he knew not," Job xxix. 16, implying that it was impossible for him otherwise to award a righteous sentence. Justice indeed is pictured blind, not because it is to be without the eye of knowledge, but the eye of partiality. Now shall not God, that is the judge of all the earth, do right? Shall he condemn and punish men for such sins as he knows not whether they have committed or not? Certain it is, that he judges men for secret sin, therefore it is also certain that he knows them. In Eccles. xi. 9, Solomon says of the voluptuous man, that for the ways of his heart, which are his secret and his hidden ways, "God will bring him to judgment;" and in Eccles. xii. 14, it is said, "that God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil;" and no wonder, since there is not so much as the least rising of the heart to sin but he views it; no circumstance so inconsiderable to our apprehensions but he ponders it; he does, as it were, severely winnow every action, and discerns that which is good in it, from that which is vile and sinful. Now there are two seasons wherein God will judge men for their secret sins. First, in this life, wherein he often gives sinners a foretaste of what he intends to do in the future; and though he does reserve the whole weight of his judgment till after death, yet he frequently dispenses some strokes of it by way of earnest before. Because not only men's desires, but also their belief, is chiefly satisfied by things present; wherefore God sometimes follows secret sins with present judgment. When Moses declared the law of God to Israel, and

withal denounced punishments to the disobedient, he applies himself especially to those that were guilty of secret disobedience; and lest they should rid themselves of the fear of those punishments, by looking upon them as future and remote, he shows how dreadfully God intends to deal with such sinners even in this life, Deut. xxix. 18—21. Here we see sin was very secret, shut up in the private reasonings and debates of the mind; but God fetches the sinner out, and purges him with present temporal judgment; for as it appears from the foregoing chapter, the curses here mentioned were chiefly such as touched men in their life, their estate, and outward relations. Such is the irrational atheism of most men, that although they have no thought, and consequently no fears of hell, yet they accordingly dread temporal affliction. Like a child that does not so much fear the loss of his life, as the loss of his apple. Let such men know, that it is very probable that by their secret sins they may bring down the curse of God upon themselves in this world; and although their hell be completed hereafter, they may begin it here. Whence is it that some men are so strangely blasted in their parts and preferment, but from some hidden sin that rots and destroys all? Whence is it that many large estates do undiscernedly shrivel away and come to nothing, but perhaps from the guilt of some secret extortion, perjury, or the like, that lies fretting and eating out the very bowels of them? I do not speak this universally, nor affirm that this is always the cause of these miseries, but it is to be feared that it is very often so.

2. The second season wherein God judges the secret passages of our sins, is at the day of judgment. In respect of which our Saviour says, that "there is nothing hid but shall be made manifest," Luke xii. 2. A thief or a murderer may carry on his villany undisclosed for many years, but the day of his trial will discover all; in Dan. vii. 10, it is said, "the judgment was set, and the books were opened." By the books is meant the knowledge of God, in which all things are kept as durably and distinctly as if they were registered in a book. Then God will open this book of his knowledge, and read all those hidden passages that are writ in it in the audience of all the world. And this is one reason why he permits so many heinous impieties to be concealed here on earth, because he intends to dignify that day with the revealment of them.

And thus much concerning the first sort of reasons, which prove that it is so, that God knows and observes the secret passages of our lives.

II. I proceed now to the second sort of reasons, that prove *whence it is that God thus knows them.* Now these proofs are very different: for the first proves, that God knows these things by

way of connection, that is, by those acts of God which are always enjoined with knowledge, as his governing, giving laws, and judging; but now these latter reasons prove that he observes all hidden things from that which is the cause of such observations.

1. And the first reason shall be drawn from God's omniscience, or his power of knowing all things: from whence it follows, that nothing can be hid from him: and this is that light which no man can keep off, any more than he can in the opening hinder the day from shining upon him; it is a light shining in every dark place; as it has no obscurity itself, so it permits nothing else to lie obscure: and that it is universal and infinite, appears from this, because otherwise it would not bear a full proportion to the rest of God's perfections. Now in respect of this, it is said in Prov. xv. 3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." And in 2 Chron. xvi. 9, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth." And in Job xxviii. 24, it is said of God that "he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heavens." How vain therefore is the thought of these men that attempt sin upon confidence of privacy, that do, as it were, dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord! Oh that such would but read and consider that text in Heb. iv. 13, "All things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Now to behold a thing as naked implies the greatest evidence and discovery. It is also said, that "secret things belong unto the Lord," Deut. xxix. 29; which, as also the forementioned places, are only so many expressions of God's infinitely comprehensive knowledge: from hence therefore we may clearly deduce what we do intend. If the perfection of God's nature engages him to know all things, he must also actually know all things, and if he actually discerns all things, he must also discern all secret things; and if he is acquainted with all secrets, he must also behold and observe the secret passages of our lives, which of all other secret things are the most considerable.

2. The second reason may be drawn from God's intimate presence to the nature and being of all things, from whence is also inferred his knowledge of them: for since there is no real distinction between the being and knowledge of God, but only in the manner of our conceptions, it follows, that where he is present in respect of his being, he must be also present in respect of his knowledge. But now the being of God is diffused through the whole and every part of the universe, as the soul insinuates itself into all the members of the body: not that God is thus present to all the world by way of identity with it (as some profane philosophers have affirmed, who, in a literal sense, may be said to have known no God but the world), but he is present with it by way of nearness and inward proximity to it. Without which, the creature could not derive continual influence from him for

the upholding of its being, but must of necessity fall back into its first nothing. From this universal presence of God, the scripture often proves the universality of his knowledge: in Jer. xxiii. 24, God thus argues himself, "Can any one hide himself in secret places that I should not see him? saith the Lord." Why? whence is it so impossible to avoid God's sight? That which follows proves it, "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." God's filling heaven and earth, that is, his being present every where, proves also that there can be no place hidden from him, but that he likewise sees every where. David also in this hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, where the text is, proves God's infinite discernment of all things, by the same argument. He had said that God "compassed his paths, and knows all his ways:" but what was the reason that convinced him of this? He sets it down in the 7th and 8th verses, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." He that always stands by us must needs see and observe what we do; wherefore, if the sinner would act his sin out of God's knowledge, let him first endeavour to go out of his presence; which he is no more able to do, than to go out of his own being. And thus much concerning the reasons proving the point: I now proceed to application.

If it is thus certain that God takes strict notice of the most secret passages of our lives, both because he overrules them, and prescribes laws to them, and judges them; and also because of his omniscience and omnipotence; then, in the first place, it may afford,

1. A use of conviction, to convince all presumptuous sinners of the atheism of their hearts. I know the proof of this point, that God sees in secret, may seem to have been unnecessary; since the general vogue of the world is ready, not only to meet, but even to prevent us in their acknowledgment of God's all-seeing eye. But if we look through men's professions, and trace their lives, we shall find that they do not really believe any such thing. For were we fully convinced that the just God, that declares himself a most certain punisher of sin, did also most certainly know sin, we should not dare to commit it presumptuously before him. Experience, the strongest argument, shows us the contrary in the ordinary passages of our lives. A very child will forbear to offend not only before his father, but before such a one from whom his father may come to know it. The reason is, because all preservations, if real, do naturally engage a man to actions suitable to those preservations. As for example, had you a thorough persuasion upon your heart that God saw you when you were attempting any vile sin, the very thought of this would beget such a reverence and a dread upon your spirits, as you could not venture to commit, if to gain a

world: for we see such thoughts cast an awe upon us, even in our deportment before men. Hence the fool, that is, the wicked man, is said to say in his heart, that "there is no God," because he does act in his life as if he thought there was none. In like manner the presuming sinner may be said to deny that God sees and observes all his actions, because he behaves himself so, as if he were really persuaded that God did not observe them. Therefore whosoever thou art, that art a presumptuous offender, setting aside all thy spurious words, when thou dost resolve upon any sin, thou dost either believe that God sees thee, or that he does not. To believe he does not, is to deny him to be God: to believe he sees thee, and yet to commit the sin, is to affront him to his face, to bid open defiance to him, and cast that unwisely contempt upon him, that the most audacious and impudent offender dares not offer to his earthly magistrate: wherefore, if from thy heart thou dost acknowledge God's all-seeing eye, cease from sin; otherwise, to any reasonable judgment thou dost really deny it, and in spite of all thy fair speeches art truly an atheist. For deeds always overbalance words, and downright practice speaks the mind more plainly than the fairest profession.

2. The second use. It speaks terror to all secret sinners: God sees and observes them in all their secresies; he spies out all their private haunts, and their sly recourses to their beloved sin. Let such men consider how unwilling they would be that men should know of their concealed villanies, of what they act by themselves: surely they would rather forfeit their lives and all that was near unto them, than their secret sins should be divulged; and then let them know that God sees them, and that it was better that they were known to all the world, that they so fear, than to him. For he sees more filth in them, than one of the most discerning and carping judgment can find in the faults of his adversary; and he does more detest them than the most holy and upright man can do the most grossest and notorious sin. Let them also consider, that the greatest ground of all their sins, which is secresy, is by God's all-seeing eye taken away. For assuredly the confidence of concealment is the greatest inducement for a hypocrite to commit the vilest sins. Psalm lxiv. 5, "They encourage themselves in an evil matter; they say, Who shall see them?" And thus confidence of secresy gave them confidence in sin. But certainly it is an ill argument, because sinners do not see God, to conclude therefore that God does not see them; like the foolish bird hiding his head in a hole, thinks himself secure from the view of the fowler, because the fowler is not in his view. O how miserably are such sinners deceived in the vain prop of a false confidence! in Psalm xc. 8, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." As God lifts up the light of his countenance upon the godly, to refresh and comfort them, so he does also upon

secret sinners to discover and to amaze them. It is said of the secret adulterers in Job xxiv. 16, 17, "They know not the light, for the morning is to them as the shadow of death." How then will they bear the light of God's countenance, which will cast the shadow of death in their faces in a much more dreadful manner? In the same verse it is said, "If one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death:" but the all-seeing God knows them: O the fear, the shame, and confusion that is in the mind of a discovered sinner! And let such an unclean person know, that he had better act his impurity in the sight of his reverend parents, and of a severe magistrate, than under the observing eye of a just and holy God, before whom secret sins are not secret, but open and revealed. Yet such as are secret to men we may rank into two sorts, both of which God perfectly knows.

1. Such as are wholly transacted in the mind, without the service and ministration of the body; and these are the sins of our thoughts and desires, which are locked up from the knowledge of men or angels. No court of human judicature pretends to judge or punish the thoughts and intentions: they are in a peculiar manner reserved for the jurisdiction of the court of heaven, which alone is able to examine and find them out. Now there is no act of man so quick as his thoughts: which, in this, resembles the angelical nature, that they are swift and invisible. Let the gross acting sinner act as fast as he can, yet the thinking sinner will have the start and advantage of him, and sin a hundred thoughts before he shall perform one sinful action. O the infinite multitudes of impure thoughts in a polluted mind, like swarms of flies upon a carcass, continually sucking and drawing in corruption. Now God has a more than ordinary respect to men's thoughts; hence God cries out of his people, in Jer. iv. 4, "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" The greatest wickedness, and that which is the most odious to God, is the wickedness of the heart, and this consists in pollution of the thoughts and desires. Nay, God does so much hate the sinfulness of these, that sometimes he expresses the whole work of conversion by the renovation and change of the thoughts, in Isaiah lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him." But was it God's intentions only to restrain these, and in the mean time to give him liberty in his sinful actions? No: but the forsaking of one implies the leaving of the other; as the greater duty includes the less. He that will not so much as indulge himself in an evil thought, will much less venture upon the gross commission of sin. Now God oftentimes judges of the state and condition of a man from the purity and impurity of his thoughts, and that upon these reasons.

(1.) Because the sin of the thoughts and desires is most spiritual, and consequently most opposite to the nature of God;

spiritual wickedness is properly contrary to spiritual holiness, and it is that by virtue whereof Satan has strongest possession of the soul, as being that wherein most men resemble him, who being destitute of a body is not capable of corporal fleshly sins: hence in Eph. vi. 12, we have the vileness of his nature expressed by "spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." Now, as there is nothing almost so evident in itself, as by the advantage of contraries, so we may see how odious spiritual sin is to God, in that spiritual duty is so acceptable. God does not so much command us to serve him, as to serve him in spirit and in truth. In all religious duties the voice of God is, "Son, give me thy heart." To find a sacrifice without a heart was always accounted a thing prodigious. To bring our bodies to church, and leave our thoughts at home; this is most detestable before God. To lift up our eyes to heaven in prayer, and yet to fix our desires upon the earth, O this his soul hates! As God drew a resemblance of himself upon the whole man, so, in a more lively manner, he imprinted it on the mind. Now one sinful thought is able to slur this image of God upon the soul; one corrupt desire is able to divest the soul of all its native innocence and purity. This certainly must be true, that that which tends to corrupt the best and most worthy part of man, must needs be the worst and greatest corruption. But all, even the heathens will acknowledge, that a man's mind is his better part; and scripture and experience tell us, that evil thoughts and desires defile the mind: therefore, we should endeavour, in the first place, the sanctification and regulation of these. Moral philosophy tells us that external actions are not morally good or evil of themselves, but by participation of the good and evil that is in the acts of the will, by which they are commanded. We are not angry with the hand that strikes us, but with the evil intention that guided the hand; nor with the tongue that curses us, but with the vile disposition of the mind that bid it curse. God commanded David to cut off the sin of Saul, in 2 Sam. xxi. 1, and he commanded Jehu to slay the posterity of Ahab. The outward action is here the same: whence then was David's action pleasing to God, and Jehu's reputed murder, Hosea i. 4, but from the difference of their thoughts and intentions? David did it with an intent to obey God, and Jehu with a design of private revenge. It is most just therefore that God should judge of the whole man by his thoughts and desires, since from these are the issues of life and death.

(2.) He judges a man by these, because his actions and practice may be overruled, but thoughts and desires are the natural and genuine offspring of the soul. Experience tells us, that we have not that command and dominion over our thoughts that we have over our actions; they admit neither of order nor limitation, but are the continual incessant bubbling up of sin out of the mind: for we may observe, that those acts that may imme-

diately result from the faculty, without the interceding command of the will, are scarcely controlled by it. How will the unruly imaginations of a vain fancy range and wander, in spite of all the dictates and commands of reason! There is nothing more easy or usual than for one to counterfeit his behaviour. A man may cause that nothing but love and kindness shall appear in his actions, when in his thoughts he breathes cruelty and murder. The hypocrite, in the outward part of the most holy duty, may make as fine and specious a show as the best, when there is nothing but sin and rottenness in his heart. Ezek. xxxiii. 31, "They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Here we see they had nothing so frequent in their words and outward services as the worship of God, and nothing so remote from their desires. But now in the thoughts there is no dissimulation; what a man is in these, that he is in truth and reality, the soul is in its thoughts, as in its retiring room; laying aside the garb and dress in which it had appeared upon the stage of the world. Nay, although a man had a full rule over his thoughts, yet they must needs be free from dissimulations, as not being capable of the causes of it. That which makes men dissemble, is a fear of and a desire to please the eyes of men; which we know cannot reach to the thoughts. It is therefore clear, that sincerity does only reside, and consequently is only to be found in these: hence we may observe that Christ, in all his replies to the Jews and the pharisees, did rather answer the inward reasonings and thoughts of their mind, than the questions they did propose. In Ezek. xiv. 3, 4, we have men addressing themselves to God in the greatest show of salvation that might be, yet he professes that he will not answer them according to those pretences, but according to the idols they had set up in their hearts. A man, by reason of his concernments and interest in the world, what for fear of this punishment, and hope of that preferment, will cast himself into such a mould, as he shall be really nothing less than what he does appear to be; his words, actions, and outward carriage shall bear no correspondence with his intentions. The covetous man, in his mind, can lay heap upon heap; and what he cannot gain by his endeavours, he will make up by his thoughts. The ambitious man will think over all the applauses and greatness of the world, and in the closet of his mind erect to himself the idol of his own excellencies, and fall down and worship it. The revengeful person, though fear will not let him act his revenge, yet in his thoughts he will stab and trample upon his brother. The lascivious wretch, though shame will not let him execute his sin, yet he will feed his corrupt fancy with unclean imaginations. In all these passages men being secure from the view of others, behave themselves according to the free

genius and inclination of their nature. But God knows all these silent workings: he knows them and abhors them: and that he does know them, he will make it appear at that day when he shall also make others know them, and when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. O what black stories will be told at the day of judgment of men's thoughts!

2. The second sort of secret sins are such as are not only transacted in the mind, but also by the body, yet are covered and kept close from the view of men. Such was David's sin in the matter of Uriah, 2 Sam. xii. 12. God says to him, "Thou didst this thing secretly." Such was Cain's murder of his brother. Such was the theft of Achan; there were no standers-by, conscious to it; it was not done before spectators. Now certainly a sinner should thus argue: If I cannot hide my secret sinful thoughts and desires from God, how much less shall I be able to conceal my actions be they ever so private. When Satan, secresy, and opportunity, all of them great tempters, shall tempt you to sin, consider that you have still this company with you, a conscience that will accuse you, and a God that will judge you. And is there any man so irrational as to commit a robbery in the sight of his accuser? to do a felony before his judge? What reason will not suffer us to do before men, shall not reason and religion keep us from committing before God. Thou mayest wrong and defraud thy neighbour in secret, Hab. ii. 11, "but the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall accuse thee." Thou mayest kill and murder, and none behold thee, Gen. iv. 10, "but the voice of thy brother's blood shall cry to God from the ground that receives it." I may here speak to the secret sinner in the words of a holy author: Let him but find some corner where God may not see him, and then let him sin as he pleases. The adulterer, in the forementioned place of Job, is said to "wait for the twilight:" but here we find in this Psalm, that "the darkness and light are both alike to God." The drunkard will presume to be drunk in the night, 1 Thess. v. 7, but here we read that "the darkness hideth not from God, but the night shineth as the day." No sins can be covered, but such as God himself shall be pleased to cover within the righteousness of his own Son. He that can see in secret, and when thou shuttest thy door behold thee praying in thy closet, can as easily see thee when thou art sinning there; and as for private duty he will reward, so for secret sin he will punish thee openly, either in this world or in another. And therefore it were good for such kind of sinners to consider, that while their door is thus shut, the gates of hell stand open.

3. As it speaks terror to all secret sinners, so it speaks no less comfort to all sincere-hearted Christians. The same sun-rising and break of day that terrifies the robber, is a comfort to the honest traveller. Thou that art sincere, God sees that sincerity

in thee that others cannot discern; yea, he often sees more sincerity in thy heart, than thou canst discern thyself. This may uphold the drooping spirits of a disconsolate soul, when the black mouths of men, steeled with ignorance and prejudice, shall be opened in hard speeches against him. For indeed now-a-days, when a man cannot find fault with his brother's outward conversation, which only he can behold, he will censure him in respect of spirituals, which no man can discern, any more than I can know what is in a man's mind by the colour of his clothes. Such men speak as if God did not only make them partake of his mercies, but also of his prerogative. And when it should be their work to resemble God in holiness, they arrogantly pretend to be like him in omniscience. How severely, though blindly, do they judge of men's hearts! Such a man is profane, another is carnal, and a mere moralist, another proud, and as to the bent and frame of his spirit, a contemner of religion: but here the sincere soul may comfort itself, when with one eye it can reflect upon its own integrity, and with the other upon God's infinite infallible knowledge, and say, Indeed, men charge me thus and thus, as false-hearted and a hypocrite, but my God knows otherwise. This, I say, may set thee above the calumnies of unreasonable men, and make thee ride upon the necks of thy accusers. And as Daniel, by trusting in his God, was secure from the mouths of the lions: so thou, by acting faith upon, and drawing comfort from God's omniscience, mayest defy the more cruel mouths of thy reproachers. When a man is accused of treason to his prince, and knows that his prince is fully assured of his innocence, he will laugh all such accusations to scorn. It is thus with God and a sincere heart: in the midst of all slanders he will own thee for innocent; as he did Job, when his friends, with much specious piety, charged him with hypocrisy. Wherefore commit thy way to the all-seeing God, to that God that is acquainted with all thy ways: that sees thy goings out and thy comings in, and continually goes in and out before thee, and will one day testify and set his seal to thy integrity. Comfort thyself in the consideration of his omniscience, from whence it is, that God judgeth not as man judgeth, but judges righteous judgment; and hold fast thy integrity that lies secret in the heart, whose praise is of God, and not of man.

SERMON XIV.

DISCONTENT WITH THE PRESENT UNREASONABLE.

ECCLESIASTES VII. 10.

Say not thou, What is the cause that former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.

IN the days of Solomon, when Jerusalem was the glory of the whole earth; when it flourished as the metropolis, not only of religion, but of the riches of the world; when gold was made as common as silver, and silver as the stones of the street (so that its inhabitants might even tread and trample upon that which so much commanded the hearts of others); when their exchequer was full, and their fleets at Ophir; when religion was established, and the changing ambulatory tabernacle fixed into a standing temple, and all crowned with a peace under Solomon after the afflictions and wars of David: when they flowed with plenty, and were governed with wisdom: yet, after all, the text here gives us a clear intimation, that plenty passed into surfeit, fulness into loathing, loathing into discontent, and that (as it always happens) into complaints of the times, viz. that "former days were better than these."

When yet, upon a small reflection backward, we have the calendar of the former times red with the bloody house of Saul, with the slaughter of the priests, and with the rebellions of Sheba and Absalom; nothing but tumults, changes, and vicissitudes; and yet, in the verdict of folly and faction, present enjoyments did so far endear former calamities, as to give them the preeminence in the comparison.

But we see, there may be folly even in Israel; and if they were all of this mind, Solomon may justly seem to have monopolized all the wisdom to himself. We have him here chastising the sottishness of this inquiry: indeed the fittest person to encounter this exception, as being a king, and so able to control; being a preacher, and so able to confute it; furnished with power for the one, and with wisdom for the other.

This is therefore the design of the words, either to satisfy or silence this malcontented inquiry: and supposing it to carry in it its own confutation, he confutes it, not by argument, but reproof; not as a doubtful problem, but as a foolish question; and certainly the case must needs be carried, where the fool makes the question, and the wisest of men gives the answer.

The matter in controversy is, the preeminence of the former times above the present; when we must observe, that though the words run in the form of a question, yet they include a positive assertion, and a downright censure.

The inquiry being determined before it was proposed, now the charge of folly here laid upon it may relate to the supposition upon which it is founded in a threefold respect, viz.

I. Of a peremptory negation, as a thing absolutely to be denied, that former times are better than the following.

II. As of a case very disputable, whether they are so or no.

III. As admitting the supposition for true, that really they are better, and so bear away the preeminence.

Yet in every one of these three most different respects, this inquiry ought to be exploded as absurd, impertinent, and irrational.

I. And first of all, that it is ridiculous to ask why former times are better than the present, if really they are not better, and so the very supposition itself proves false; this is too apparently manifest to be matter of dispute: and that it is false, we shall endeavour to prove and evince in the ensuing discourse. But before I enter upon the proof of it, this one observation must be premised:

That time is said to be good or bad, not from any such quality inherent in itself, but by external denomination from the nature of those things that are and do subsist in such a space of time. Time is the great vehicle of nature, not only for its swift passage and career, but because it carries in it the system of the world, from one stage and period of duration to another.

Now the world may be considered either in its natural or moral perfections. Some hold, that for the former, there is a continual diminution and an insensible decay in nature, things growing less and less, the very powers and faculties of them being weakened and shrunk; and the vital spirit, or *humidum radicale*, that God and nature first infused into the great body of the universe, being much exhausted, so that now, in every following age, the lamps of heaven burn dimmer and dimmer, till, at length, they dwindle into nothing, and so go out of themselves.

But that this cannot be so, is clear from these reasons. 1st. Because the ancientest histories generally describe things in the same posture heretofore that we find them now. 2nd. That admitting the least and most undiscernible degree of diminution, even to but one remove from none at all, the world, in the space of six thousand years, which date it almost now bears, by the continuance but of that small proportion of change, would have sunk even to nothing, or the smallness of an atom. 3rd. This will make the final annihilation of the world a mere effect of nature, and not of God's supernatural power; and so the consequent of it is irreligious.

Wherefore, it being sure that the whole fabric of the world stands in the same vigour and perfection of nature which it had at first, we come next to that in which we are now most concerned, to see whether or no it be impaired and sunk in its moral perfections, and what is the consequent of that in political.

We have here an aphorism of Horace much inculcated: *Terra malos homines nunc educat atque pusillos.* But poetry never yet went for argument: and, perhaps, he might speak this, being conscious of his own manners, and reflecting upon his own stature. But that in the descent of succeeding generations, the following are not still the worse, I thus evince.

1. By reason: because there were the same objects to work upon men, and the same dispositions and inclinations in men to be wrought upon, before, that there are now. All the affairs of the world are the births and issue of men's actions; and all actions come from the meeting and collision of faculties with suitable objects. There were then the same incentives of desire on the one side, the same attractiveness in riches, the same relish in sovereignty, the same temptation in beauty, the same delicacy in meats and taste in wines; and, on the other side, there were the same appetites of covetousness and ambition, the same fuel of lust and intemperance.

And these are the wheels upon which the whole visible scene of affairs, ethic and politic, turns and depends. The business of the world is imitation, and that which we call novelty is nothing but repetition. The figure and motion of the world is circular, and experience no less than mathematics will evince, that as it turns round, the same part must be often in the same place. One age indeed goes before another: but precedency is not always preeminence, and it is not unusual for a worse to go before a better, and for the servant to ride before and lead the way to his master.

2. But secondly, the same may be proved by history, and the records of antiquity; and he who would give it the utmost proof that it is capable of from this topic, must speak volumes, and preach libraries, bring a century within a line, and an age into every period. But what need we go any further than the noblest and yet the nearest piece of antiquity, the book of Moses.

Is the wickedness of the old world forgot, that we do so aggravate the tempest of this? Was it destroyed with waters of oblivion? and has the deluge clean overwhelmed and sunk itself? In those days there were giants in sin, as well as sinners of the first magnitude, and of the largest size and proportion.

And to take the world in a lower epocha, what after-age could exceed the lust of the Sodomites, the idolatry and tyranny of the Egyptians, the fickle levity of the Grecians? and that monstrous mixture of all baseness in the Roman Neros, Caligulas, and Domitians, emperors of the world, and slaves to their vice?

And for the very state of Israel, in which this envious inquiry was first commenced, was that worse in Canaan, under the shadow and protection of a native royalty, than under the old servitude and tyranny of Egypt? Was their present condition so bad, that while Solomon was courting Pharaoh's daughter, they should again court his yoke? woo their old slavery, and solicit a match with their former bondage? Was it so delightful a condition, to feed Pharaoh's cattle, and to want straw themselves? instead of one prince, to have many task-masters? and to pay excise with their backs to maintain the tyrant's janizaries, and to feed their tormentors? But it seems, being in a land flowing with honey, they were cloyed with that, and so, loathing the honey, they grew in love with the sting.

But to bring the subject to our own doors, if we would be convinced that former ages are not always better than the following, I suppose we need not much rack our memories for a proof from experience.

I conceive the state of the Christian church also may come within the compass of our present discourse. Take it in its infancy, and with the properties of infancy, it was weak and naked, vexed with poverty, torn with persecution, and infested with heresy. It began the breach with Simon Magus, continued it with Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, Aerius, some rending her doctrine, some her discipline; and what are the heresies that now trouble it, but new editions of the old with further gloss and enlargement? What is Socinus, but Photinus and Pelagius blended and joined together, in a third composition? What are our separatists and purity-pretending schismatics, but the tame brood and successors of the Donatists? only with this difference, that they had their head-quarters *in meridie*, in the southern parts of the world, whereas ours seem to be derived to us from the north. These, I thought, had put it out of dispute, that no succeeding age of the church could have been worse: and, I think, the assertion might have stood firm, had not some late instances of our own age made it disputable.

But as for those who clamour of the corruptions of our present church, and are so earnest to reduce us to the primitive model: if they mean the primitive truth, and not rather the primitive nakedness of it only, we know this, for doctrine and discipline it is the very transcript of antiquity. But if their design be to make us like the primitive Christians, by driving us into caves, and holes, and rocks; to tear down temples and to make the sanctuary itself fly for refuge; to bring beasts into churches, and to send churchmen into dens; at the same time to make men beggars and to take away hospitals; it is but reason to desire that they would first begin and exemplify this reformation in themselves; and, like the old Christians, with want and poverty wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins: though, if

they should, that is not presently a sheep that wears the skin, nor would the sheep's clothing change the nature of the wolf.

I conclude therefore, that all these pompous declamations against the evil of the present times, set off by odious comparisons with the former, are the voice of error and envy, of the worst of judges, malice and mistake: though I cannot wonder if those assert affairs to be out of order, whose interest and desire it is to be once more a reforming.

And thus much for the first consideration of the suppositions; as a thing false, and to be denied. I shall now

II. In the second place, remit a little of this, and take it in a lower respect; as a case disputable, whether the preceding or succeeding generations are to be preferred; and here I shall dispute the matter on both sides.

1. And first for antiquity, and the former ages, we may plead thus. Certainly every thing is purest in the fountain and most untainted in the original. The dregs are still the most likely to settle in the bottom, and to sink into the last ages. The world cannot but be the worse for wearing; and it must needs have contracted much dross, when at the last it cannot be purged but by a universal fire.

Things are most fresh and fragrant in their beginning. The first-born is the most honourable, and it is primogeniture that entitles to the inheritance: it is not present possessions, but an early pedigree, that gives nobility.

The older the world grows, the more decrepit it must be: for age bows the body, and so causes an obliquity. Every course of time leaves its mark behind it; and every century adds a wrinkle to the face of nature.

As for knowledge, the former age still teaches the latter; and which is likely to be most knowing, he that teaches or he that is taught? The best and most compendious way of attaining wisdom is, the reading of histories, but history speaks not of the present time, but of the former.

Besides, it was only the beginning of time that saw men innocent. Sin, like other things, receives growth by time, and improves by continuance: and every succeeding age has the bad example of one age more than the former. The same candle that refreshes when it is first light, smells and offends when it is going out.

In the alphabet of nature, it is only the first letter that is flourished. In short, there is as much difference between the present and former times, as there is between a copy and an original; that indeed may be fair, but this only is authentic. And be a copy never so exact, yet still it shines with a borrowed perfection, and has but the low praise of an imitation: and this may be said in behalf of the former times.

2. But secondly, for the preeminence of the succeeding ages above the former, it may be disputed thus:

If the honour be due to antiquity, then certainly the present age must claim it, for the world is now oldest, and therefore upon the very right of seniority may challenge the precedency; for certainly, the longer the world lasts, the older it grows. And if wisdom ought to be respected, we know, that it is the offspring of experience, and experience the child of age and continuance.

In every thing and action it is not the beginning, but the end that is regarded: it is still the issue that crowns the work, and the Amen that seals the petition: the *plaudite* is given to the last act: and Christ reserved the best wine to conclude the feast; nay, a fair beginning would be but the aggravation of a bad end.

And if we plead original, we know that sin is strongest in its original; and we are taught whence to date that. The lightest things float at the top of time, but if there be such a thing as a golden age, its mass and weight must needs sink it to the bottom and concluding ages of the world.

By having the histories of former ages, we have all their advantages by way of overplus, besides the proper advantages of our own; and so standing upon their shoulders, or rather upon their heads, cannot but have the further prospect.

Though the flourish begins the line, yet it is the period that makes the sense. As for the infirmities of age, we confess that men grow decrepit by time, but mankind does not. Policy, arts, and manufactures improve; and nature itself, as well as others, cannot be an artist, till it has served its time.

And, in religious matters, for the church, we know that it is Christ's body, and therefore its most natural, commending property is growth: but growth is the effect of duration, and if it had had its greatest perfection at the first, growth would have been impossible.

Besides, we confess that prophecy was a thing appropriate to the first days of the church: but then it is not prophecy spoken, but fulfilled; not the promise made, but performed, which conveys the blessing; and though the giving of prophecies were the glory of the first times, yet their completion is the privilege of the latter.

But do we not see all this while, that by thus ascribing the preeminence to former ages, we tacitly reflect a reproach upon the great Maker and Governor of the universe? for can omnipotence be at a stand? is God exhausted? and is nature the only thing which makes no progress? God has made all things in motion, and the design of motion is a further perfection.

In sum, it was the fulness of time which brought Christ into the world; Christianity was a reserve for the last: and it was the beginning of time which was infamous for man's fall and ruin;

so, in scripture, they are called the "last days" and the "ends of the world," which are ennobled with his redemption.

But lastly, if the following ages were not the best, whence is it that the older men grow, the more still they desire to live?—Now such things as these may be disputed in favour of the latter times beyond the former.

Having here brought the matter to this poise, to this equilibrium, that reflexive inquiry in the text concerning the worth of former times above the present, is eminently unreasonable in these two respects.

1. In respect of the nature of the thing itself; which we have seen is equally propendent to both parts, and not discernible which way the balance inclines; and nothing can be more irrational, than to be dogmatical in things doubtful; and to determine, where wise men only dispute.

2. In respect of the incompetence of any man living to be judge in this controversy: and he that is unfit to judge, I am sure is unable to decide. Now that incompetence arises from this; that no man can judge rightly of two things, but by comparing them together, and compare them he cannot unless he exactly knew them both. But how can he know former ages, unless, according to the opinion of Plato or Pythagoras, he might exist and be alive so many centuries before he was born?

But you will reply, that he may know them by the histories of those that wrote of their own times.

To this I answer, that history may be justly suspected partial; and that historians report the virtues of their own age, selected and abstracted from the vices and defects; and if sometimes they mention the vices also (as they do), yet they only report the smaller, that they may with less suspicion conceal the greater. Now it is an unequal comparison to compare the select virtues of one age, with both the virtues and the vices of another.

History, stripped of partiality, would be a poor, thin, meagre thing, and the volume would shrink into the index. I conclude therefore, that he who would decide this controversy, whether the former or latter times ought to have the preeminence, by the historians of those times: he properly does this; he first calls a man into question, and then makes him judge in his own cause, and at the best sees only by another's eyes.

III. Come we now to the third and last ground. That admitting this supposition as true, that the former ages are really the best, and to be preferred: yet still this querulous reflection upon the evil of the present times, stands obnoxious to the same charge of folly: and, if it be condemned also upon this supposition, I see not where it can take sanctuary. Now that it ought to be so, I demonstrate by these reasons.

1. Because such complaints have no efficacy to alter or remove

the cause of them: thoughts and words alter not the state of things. The rage and expostulations of discontent are like a thunder without a thunder-bolt, they vanish and expire into noise and nothing; and like a woman, are only loud and weak.

States are not altered, nor governments changed, because such a one is discontented, and tells us so in a sermon, or writes it in a book, and so prints himself a fool. Sad, undoubtedly, were our case, should God be angry with a nation as often as a preacher is pleased to be passionate, and to call his distemper the word of God.

A quill is but a weak thing to contest with a sceptre; and a satirical remonstrance to stand before a sword of justice. The laws will not be worded out of their course. The wheel will go on, though the fly sits and flutters and buzzes upon it.

It would be well if such persons would take Luther's advice to Melancthon, and be persuaded to leave off to govern the world, and not to frame new politic ideas; not to raise models of state, and holy commonwealths, in their little discontented closets; nor to arraign a council before a conventicle; and being stripped of their arms, to fly to revelation; and when they cannot effect, at least prophesy a change.

Though there be a lion, a bull, a venomous serpent, and a fiery scorpion in the zodiac, yet, still the sun holds on his way, goes through them all, brings the year about, finishes his course, shines, and is glorious in spite of such opposition. The maunderings of discontent are like the voice and behaviour of a swine, who when he feels it rain, runs grumbling about, and, by that, indeed, discovers his nature, but does not avoid the storm.

2. Such complaints of the evil of the times are irrational, because they only quicken the smart, and add to the pressure. Such querulous invectives against a standing government are like a stone flung at a marble pillar, which not only makes no impression upon that, but rebounds and hits the flinger in the face. Discontent burns only that breast in which it boils; and, when it is not contented to be hot within, but must boil over in unruly, unwarrantable expressions, to avoid the heat, it wisely takes refuge in the fire. Hence, when the sea swells and rages, we say not improperly, that the sea itself is troubled.

Submission is that which either removes or lightens the burden. Giving way either avoids or eludes the blow: and where an enemy or an affliction is too strong, patience is the best defiance.

And herein does the admirable wisdom of God appear, in modelling the great economy of the world, so uniting public and private advantages, that those affections and dispositions of mind, that are most conducible to the safety of government and society, are also most advantageous to every man in his own personal capacity. For, does not an humble compliant subjection at the same time strengthen the hands of the magistrate, and bless the

person that has it with the privileges of quiet and content. He who has content, has that for which others would be great; he both secures and enjoys himself: but on the contrary, he that frets and fumes and is angry, he raises tumults abroad, and feels the same within: as he that cries, and roars, and makes a noise, first hinders his own sleep, before he breaks the rest of others: and it is not unusual, to see a fire sometimes stifled and extinguished in its own smoke.

In short, discontent is as laborious as useless: and he who will rebel, must reckon upon the cost and conduct of an army; and endure the trouble of watching, as well as use the dissimulation of praying.

3. Thirdly and lastly, these censorious complaints of the evil of the times are irrational, because the just cause of them is resolvable into ourselves. It is not the times that debauch men, but men that derive and rabb a contagion upon the time: and it is still the liquor that first taints and infects the vessel.

Time is harmless, it passes on, and meddles with none; the sun rises, the year proceeds, and the seasons return, according to the decrees of nature, and the inviolate constancy of a perpetual course. And is it not irrational for a man to cast the errors of his choice upon the necessity of fate? or to complain that men speak low, because his hearing is decayed? and to utter satires and declamations against those times which his own vice has made bad? and, like Amnon, defile his sister, and then loathe her for the wrong he did her.

Thus we use to say, it is the room that smokes, when indeed it is the fire which is in the room: and it is still the fault of the common banter or way of speaking, to disjoin the accusation and the crime, and to charge a land with the vices of its inhabitants.

But I should think that it might not be so difficult a thing to find out a way both to remedy the complaint, and to remove the cause of it. For, let but the prodigal confine himself, and measure his expenses by his own abilities, and not by another's books: let him trust himself more, and others less: let ministers cease to call faction religion, to lift up their voice too much like a trumpet, and in petitions for peace, declare for war: and let not others think themselves wronged, if they be not revenged: let no man be forced to buy what he has already earned: to pay for his wages, and to lay down new sums for the price of his blood and the just merit of his service: and then, certainly, there will be no cause to prefer former ages before the present. But if men will extravagantly plunge themselves in debt, and then rail and cry out of bad times, because they are arrested: if the gallant will put all upon his back, and then exclaim against the government because he has nothing for his belly: if men will think themselves bound to preach the nation all on fire, and being stopped in their attempt, cry out of persecution: if the public

peace must be sacrificed to private revenge, certainly the complaint is impudent and brutish, and deserves to be sent to the law for an answer, and to the gaol for satisfaction.

But it is a sure, though no new observation, that the most obnoxious are still the most querulous: that discontent, and the cause of it, are generally from the same person: and that when once the remorses of guilt and villany improve into discontent, it is not less difficult to make such persons contented than to make them innocent.

Rigour and contempt are the best correctors of this distemper. And he who thinks that such persons may be pacified, may as well attempt to satisfy the bottomless pit, the cravings of hell, or the appetites of the grave, which may sooner be filled (as impossible as that is) than be satisfied.

For where interests are contradictory (as in all societies or companies of men some must needs be) there a universal satisfaction is just in the same measure possible, in which contradictions are reconcilable. And doubtless there have been those who have heartily cursed that rain, or sunshine, for which others have as heartily prayed.

Even our blessed Saviour himself, we read, in Heb. xii. 3, "endured the contradiction of sinners:" and (be it spoken with reverence) it would put Providence itself to a kind of nonplus, to attemper any dispensation of it to a universal acceptance; any more than that glorious fountain of light, the sun, can shine upon all the corners of the earth at once. Wherefore, since the distemper we speak of is incorrigible, and the remedy deplorable: let not bare power attempt to outdo omnipotence; nor the gods of the earth (as they are called) think to do that which the God of heaven has never yet thought fit to effect.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XV.

ON THE DANGER OF DEFERRING REPENTANCE.

[A Funeral Discourse.]

MATTHEW v. 25, 26.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

IN these words Christ endeavours to enforce that high and noble duty of an amicable concord and agreement betwixt brethren; the greatest bond of society and the most becoming ornament of religion: and since it is to be supposed, that men's frailty and passion will sometimes carry them out to a violation and breach of it; and, if not prevented, settle in a fixed and lasting rancour; he prescribes the antidote of a speedy reconcilement, as the only sovereign and certain remedy against the poisonous ferment of so working a distemper. If an injury be once done, Christ will have the repentance almost as early as the provocation, the rupture drawn up as soon as made, the angry word eaten as soon as uttered, and in a manner disowned before it is quite spoken; that so men's quickness in the one may in some measure answer and compound for their hastiness in the other.

And since those are always the strongest and most effectual addresses to the mind of man, that press a duty not only by the proposal of rewards to such as perform, but also of punishments to such as neglect it; Christ therefore shows us the necessity of immediately making peace with our injured brother, from the unavoidable misery of those obstinate wretches, that persist in and (as much as in them lies) perpetuate an injury; and being mortal themselves, yet affect a kind of immortality in their mutual hatreds and animosities.

As for the words, some understand them in a literal, and some in a figurative sense.

Those who take them literally, affirm that Christ intended no parable in them at all, but by *adversary* meant any man whom we had injured, any one that has an action against us; and by *way*, a way properly so taken; and by a *judge*, *officer*, and *prison*,

an earthly judge, officer, and prison. And thus Chrysostom understands them, according to the strict acceptation of the letter, affirming that Christ's whole scope and intent was to terrify men from being injurious to their brethren, by showing what severe inexorable usage would attend such as should offend in this kind.

Others will have the whole scheme of the text figurative, and to be understood only in a spiritual sense: according to which opinion, it will be requisite to give some short account of the several terms contained therein, and to show briefly and distinctly, what may spiritually be meant by each of them.

1. And first, for the word *adversary*. Not to traverse the various and differing opinions of commentators; if the form of the words should be only tropical and figurative, I conceive it most rational to understand here by *adversary*, either the divine law, or a man's own conscience as commissionated by that law, to accuse, charge, and arraign him before the great and dreadful tribunal of God. For to make either God himself the adversary, who in this case must of necessity be supposed to be the judge; or Satan the adversary, who upon the same account must needs be the officer or executioner; or lastly, to make a man's own sin the adversary, which howsoever it may cry out for justice against him, yet can with no tolerable sense be said to be that which he is here commanded to agree with; these, I say, all and every one of them are such unnatural assertions, and the grounds of them so weak, and the consequences of them so absurd, that any ordinary reason may soon discern the falseness and unfitness of such an exposition of the word: which, how tropical soever the scheme of the text may be, still ought to maintain that due analogy and relation, that the things signified by those words naturally bear to one another.

2. By the *way* is meant the time of this life, or rather the present opportunities of repentance, which last not always as long as life lasts. These are the happy seasons of making up all differences with a threatening law and an accusing conscience; the great pathway of peace, in which we may meet and join hands with our angry adversary, and so close up all those fatal breaches, through which the wrath of an ireful judge may hereafter break in upon us.

3. By *judge* is meant (as we have intimated already) the great God of heaven, who at the last and great day shall judge the world. We may behold him in Psalm l., as it were advanced upon his throne of justice, and from thence summoning all flesh before him to receive sentence according to the merit of their ways; and it is emphatically added in the sixth verse of that Psalm, "for God is judge himself."

4. By *officer* (as we also hinted before) is to be meant the devil, the great gaoler of souls, the cruel and remorseless executioner of that last and terrible sentence, which the righteous judge of heaven and earth shall award to all impenitent sinners.

5. By *prison* (no doubt) is meant hell, that vast, wide, comprehensive receptacle of damned spirits: from whence there is no redemption or return. As for that larger signification, that some would fasten upon the word here, there is no solid ground for it, either in the context or the reason of the thing itself. Hell is a prison large enough already, and we need not enlarge it by our expositions.

6. And lastly, by *paying the utmost farthing*, must be signified, the guilty person's being dealt with according to the utmost rigour and extremity of justice. For when the sinner is once lodged in that sad place, his punishment can have neither remission nor extenuation: but there must be an exact commensuration between the guilt and the penalty; which must be adjusted according to the strictest measures of the law. For mercy has no more to do, when justice is once commanded to do its office.

All these things are very easy and obvious, and I cannot but think it needless to insist any longer upon them.

And thus I have given you both the literal and the figurative sense of the words; and if it be now asked which of them is to take place, I answer, that the words are parabolical, and include them both. For the better understanding of which, we are to observe these two things concerning parables.

First, that every parable is made up of two parts: 1. The material, literal part, which is contained in those bare words and expressions in which it is set down. 2. The formal, spiritual part, or application of the parable, which consists of those things that are further signified to us under those literal expressions.

The other thing to be observed is, that this spiritual part or application of the parable is sometimes expressed and positively set down *in terminis:* as in St. Matt. xiii., where Christ speaks of the seed and of the ground. He afterwards explains himself, and says, that by the seed is meant the word, and by the ground, the hearers. And sometimes again this spiritual part is not expressed, but only implied or understood, as in Matt. xxv., where Christ sets down the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, yet does not in express words set down the spiritual meaning and design of it, but leaves us to comment upon that in our own meditations. And so he does here: we have the literal part or outside of the parable expressed, but the spiritual sense of it understood.

Now these two rules thus premised, we are to observe further, that in the application of the parable, and bringing the two parts of it together, the literal and the spiritual, we are not to search after a nice and exact agreement between them in every particular; but to attend only their correspondence in the design, drift, and purpose of the parable. Which design doubtless in these words is no other than to set forth the severity of God's proceedings against all impenitent unreconciled sinners, by showing that strict

and unrelenting severity that a man not reconciled to his adversary meets with even before the tribunals of men: so that we are not now anxiously to strain the parable, and to fit every member of the literal expression to the spiritual meaning; as that, because in judicial processes amongst men there is an adversary, a judge, and an officer, and all these three distinct persons, there must therefore be such an economy in the tribunal of heaven. No: all these things belong only to the material part, the dress and ornament of the parable; but the sense and purpose that Christ drives at, is that only which we are here to insist upon. As if Christ should say,

You know that in matters between man and man, when one has trespassed against another, if the party offending, while he has opportunity to make his peace with the party offended, shall neglect it, so that the matter comes at length to be brought before the judge; he is then to look for nothing but the most rigorous penalty of the law without mitigation. Just so it is between God and man; if any one sins against God, whether by offending his brother, or by any other kind of sin whatsoever, if he does not speedily and prudently lay hold on the opportunity of reconciling himself to God in this life, when God shall enter into judgment with him in the next, there will then be no mercy for him; but, according to the exact tenor of a righteous indispensable law, he must abide the woful irreversible sentence of eternal death. This is a compendious paraphrase upon the text, setting forth the full meaning of our Saviour in it. So that from what has been laid down, I shall now present you with the sense of the words, under these three conclusions.

1. That the time of this life is the only time for a sinner to make his peace with, and to reconcile himself to God.

2. That the consideration, that the time of this life is the only time for a sinner to reconcile himself to God in, ought to be a prevailing unanswerable argument to engage and quicken his repentance.

3. That if a sinner lets pass this season of making his peace with God, he irrecoverably falls into an estate of utter perdition.

I shall single out the second for the subject of the present discourse, and take in the rest under the arguments by which I shall prove it.

The proposition therefore to be handled is this, That the consideration, &c. Now this shall be made appear these three ways.

I. By comparing the shortness of life with the difficulty of this work.

II. By comparing the uncertainty of life with the necessity of it. And,

III. And lastly, by considering the sad and fatal doom that will infallibly attend the neglect of it.

I. And for the first of these. Let us compare the shortness of

life with the greatness and difficulty of the work here set before us. What is a man's whole life but the inconsiderable measure of a span? and yet the vast business of eternity is crowded into this poor compass. It is a transitory puff of wind; while it breathes, it expires. The years of our life are but too fitly styled in holy writ "the days of our life." Man takes his breath but short, and that is an argument that it is always departing. "Our days," says the royal prophet, "are but as a shadow." Every day added to our life sets us so much nearer to death, as the longer the shadow grows, the day is so much the nearer spent. "Few and evil have the days of my life been," says Jacob in Gen. xlvii. 9. The number of our calamities far exceeds the number of our days. It is a pilgrimage (as it is expressed in the same verse), it is a going through the world, not a dwelling in it. We do not use to make a long stay in the journey, nor to take up our habitation at an inn. As Lot said of Zoar, the city of life, so we may say of the time and space of life, "Is it not a little one?" How is it passing away continually! how is it stealing from us, while we are eating, sleeping, talking! How is it shortened even while we are complaining of its shortness! There is nothing that we can either think, speak, or do, but it takes up some time. We cannot purchase so much as a thought or a word without the expense of some of our precious moments. God has shut us up within the boundaries of a contracted age, so that we cannot attempt, much less achieve, any thing great or considerable. Our time is too scant and narrow for our designs. Our thoughts perish before they can ripen into action; the space of life being like the bed mentioned in Isa. xxviii. 20; "It is shorter than a man can well stretch himself upon it." For how do we hear the saints complaining of this in scripture! Sometimes it is termed "a vapour," James iv. 14, a thing that appears and disappears almost in the same instant. Sometimes it is likened to "a tale that is told," Psalm xc. 9; a frivolous thing, and after a few words speaking, quickly at an end. And sometimes again, it is resembled to "a watch in the night." We are presently called off our station, and another generation comes in our room. This is the best that can be said of life, and what shall we do to make it otherwise? Stretch or draw it out we cannot beyond the fatal line; it is not in our power to add one cubit to the measure of our days. We cannot slacken the pace of one of our posting minutes. But time will have its uncontrolled course and career, bringing age and death along with it, and, like the Parthian, shooting its killing arrows, while it flies from us. This is our condition here, this the lot of nature and mortality.

And now, if upon this transient survey of the shortness of life, we could find that our business were as small as our age is short, it would be some relief to us however. But on the contrary, the work of our lives is long, difficult, tedious, and comprehensive,

such as could easily exhaust and take up the utmost period of the most extended age, and still cry out for more. And if so, then certainly, to have a large task enjoined, and but a poor pittance of time to discharge it in, to have a large tale of brick required, and a small allowance of straw to prepare it with, cannot but be a great and heart-discouraging disadvantage. Yet this is our case, our sin has cut short our time, and enlarged our work: as it is with a man going up a hill, and falling backwards; his journey is thereby made longer, and his strength weaker. Seneca, speaking of the shortness of life, says, that we did not first receive it short, but have made it so. But by his favour, nature gave it but short; and we, by ill husbanding it, have made it much shorter; spending vainly and lavishly upon a small stock, so many of our precious hours being cast away upon idle discourse, intemperate sleep, unnecessary recreations, if not also heinous sins; all which have set us backward in the accounts of eternity, and are now to be reckoned amongst "the things that are not:" while in the mean time the business incumbent on us, is to recover our lost souls, to return and reconcile ourselves to a provoked God, to get our natures renewed, and reinformed with a holy and divine principle; and in a word, to regain our title to heaven. All these are great, high, and amazing works, beyond our strength, nay our very apprehensions, if an overpowering grace from heaven does not assist and carry us above ourselves. It is a miracle to consider, that such a pitiful thing as this life is, even upon the longest extent and the best improvement of it, should afford time enough to compass so vast a business, as the working out of a man's salvation.

Now the difficulty of this business will appear from these considerations:

1. Because in this business thou art to clear thyself of an injury done to an infinite offended justice, to appease an infinite wrath, and an infinite provoked majesty. And this must needs be no small or ordinary work; for who can stand before them! Wherefore it is the highest prudence to engage in it betimes, and to take up injuries between God and thy soul as speedily as may be. For if God should go to law with thee, or thou with him, thou wert undone for ever. He who goes to law with this king, is like to have but bad success. "No flesh living," says the psalmist, "shall in thy sight be justified." Certainly the consideration of thy debts should take up thy thoughts, even by night as well as day, hold thy eyes waking, and make thee take every step with terror, lest divine justice should arrest thee of a sudden. For, O man! whosoever thou art, according as the party is whom thou hast offended, the difficulty of the reconcilement will be proportionable. If thou hast offended a friend, the Spirit of God says, that "it is easier to win a castle, than to regain such a one." If thou hast offended thy sovereign, "the anger

of a king is as the roaring of a lion." Now thy business is to make thy peace both with an offended friend and with an affronted sovereign. Thy debts are many thousand talents; and as for thee to pay them is impossible, so to get a surety for so much will be very difficult. When a creditor is urgent for his money, or for thy body, there is no demur, no delay then to be made. God has a writ out against thee, and is ready to arrest thee either for the debt, or for thy soul. And it will cost thee many prayers, many a hard fight and combat with thy sin, many mortifying duties and bitter pangs of repentance, before Christ will come in and pay the debt and set thee free; and when this is done, how difficult will it be to get the Spirit to set his seal to thy pardon, and to keep the evidences of it for thee clear and entire. For without thy justification thou canst have no security, and without thy evidences thou canst have no comfort. It requires the most strict and accurate walking before God that can be, with a frequent and thorough examination of all thy experiences; and yet perhaps when all this is done, thou mayest fall short of it at last. For sometimes one great sin, one dangerous false step in the ways of God, may so blot thy evidences, that thou shalt even think the love of God is gone from thee; that he has shut up his tender bowels in anger, and that he has forgotten to be gracious: so that thou mayest go mourning all thy days, and die doubtful whether thou hast made a thorough peace with God or no. And is not the overcoming of this difficulty worth the spending of thy best time and thy choicest endeavours? Can it be done in a moment? Is it, think you, the easy performance of a few hours? No; God has rated these acquirements at the price of our greatest, severest, and longest labours. And to show yet further, how difficult it is to make thy peace with the great God, consider how hard it is to make thy peace with thy own conscience. And shall a bare witness (for conscience is no more) prosecute the suit so hard against thee, and shall not the adversary himself be much more violent and hard to be taken off? When thy own heart shall so bitterly charge thee with thy guilt, and the black roll of thy most provoking sins shall be read against thee by an angry conscience, will a small matter, think you, give it satisfaction? Will a few broken sighs, and tears, and mournful words, make it compound the matter with thee, and let the suit fall? No, certainly; the time of thy whole life, upon the best and strictest improvement of it, is but little enough to clear up and settle all differences between thee and thy conscience; and how much less then can it be to pacify, and make all even with thy offended God!

2. The other cause of the difficulty of making thy peace with God appears from this, that thou art utterly unable of thyself to give him any thing by way of just compensation or satisfaction. We have a large instance of something offered that way in Micah vi. 7, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten

thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Alas! all this is but an impossible supposition; but yet shows, that all and the very utmost that the creature does, or can do, or give, is but debt and duty, and that surely is not meritorious.

Can a man pay his old debts by discharging his present? Can the creature oblige God by any good duty, when it is God himself that enables him to perform that duty? It may be said, that Christ has engaged to make the soul's peace, to clear off his debts to God. True: but then the soul engages in a new debt of faith and obedience to Christ. And here all the stress of the business lies, how the soul will be able to pay off this, and to secure itself a well-grounded interest and confidence in Christ; to take him in respect of all his offices; not only to be saved, but also to be ruled by him; not only as a priest, but also as a king. This will drink up and engross all that the soul can do and endeavour; all the strength and time allotted in this world, is little enough to do such works as may prove the sincerity of its faith. For whatsoever relation faith may have to works, whether as to a part, or to a consequent to it; it is certainly such a thing, as indispensably obliges the whole of a man's following life, to a strict, constant, and universal obedience to the laws of Christ. But that which ought chiefly to quicken the soul to a sudden improvement of the perishing time of this life, in making its peace with God, is this, that as Christ will not undertake for it without faith and repentance, so the offer of these does not last always. The consideration of this made the apostle quicken the Hebrews to present duty: "To-day if you will hear his voice," Heb. iii. 15. There may be those offers of mercy made to thee to-day, that thou mayest not enjoy again for ever. The things of thy peace may be freely held forth to thee now, which for the future may be set out of thy reach. Consider therefore upon what terms thou standest with God, and lose no time: the work is difficult, and the delay dangerous, and the time short. The Spirit that to-day stands at thy door and knocks, may be gone before to-morrow; and when it is once sent away, no man can assure himself that it will ever return.

And thus much concerning the first argument to prove the doctrine, drawn from our comparing the shortness of life with the greatness and difficulty of the work.

II. The second argument is taken from our comparing the uncertainty of life with the necessity of the work. Life, as it is short, so it is dubious; like a problematical question, concise but doubtful. None can promise beyond the present. Who can secure to himself the enjoyment of a year, nay of one day, one hour? "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee," Luke xii. 20. A man is in this contracted life as in a narrow

sea, ever and anon ready to be cast away. Strength and health of body can make thee no absolute promise of life, although the surest grounds we can build upon. For may we not take up the complaint of David, and mourn over the immature death of the strong! "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" How are the strong and healthful become a prey to an untimely death! Count not therefore how many hours thou hast to live in the world: look not upon thy hour-glass; do not build upon the sand. Death may snatch thee away of a sudden. As it is always terrible, so it is often unexpected. Thou flourishest at present like a flower, but the wind bloweth where and when it listeth. "It passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more," Psalm ciii. 16.

Now this being considered and duly pondered in one scale of the balance, and the necessity of making our peace in the other, how should it incite us to a serious, present endeavour for the accomplishment of this work? "Can two walk together, unless they be agreed?" says the prophet Amos, iii. 3. Canst thou walk quietly with God while he is thy adversary? Will not the consideration of this, that thou art going to the judge, and the way is short, and thy adversary ready to give in an accusation against thee, whet thy importunity to make an agreement with him? Thy endeavours are not serious and rational, unless they are present and immediate. That endeavour is only rational, which is according to the exigency of the thing. Now the business of thy soul is the matter thou art to engage in, and thou art only sure of the present time to manage it in. Unless this be laid hold of, thou dost really trifle in the business of eternity, and dost only embrace a pretence instead of a serious intention. Things that are earnestly desired, and withal not to be delayed, are effected with an immediate expedition. If I am uncertain when my enemy will invade me, I will imagine that he will do it suddenly, and therefore my preparations shall be sudden. In things that concern our temporal interest, we are so wise as to make present provision; and not to suspend all upon contingent futurities. He that is sick to-day, will not defer sending for a physician till to-morrow. He that waits for the fall of some preferment, puts himself in a present preparedness. But alas! upon all these things the most we can write, it is convenience, not necessity. There is one thing, and but one that is necessary. It is not necessary that thou shouldest be healthful, nor that thou shouldest be honourable; but it is necessary for thee to be saved; to be at peace with God; to have the hand-writing that is against thee, by reason of the law, blotted out; to be friends with an almighty adversary. It was the note of a merry epicure, but may be refined into a voice becoming a Christian, Τὸ σήμερον μέλει μοι, τὸ δ' αὔριον τίς οἶδε; I will take care for to-day, who knows to-morrow? Let the Christian lay hold of the present occasion;

and if he would live for ever, let him look upon himself as living but to-day: let this be secured, and whatsoever comes afterwards, let him reckon it as an overplus, and an unexpected gain. If to-day it be thy business to gain a peace, all the rest of thy days it is thy only business to enjoy it. Reason is impatient of delay in things necessary, and Christianity elevates reason, and makes it more impatient. Are we not bid to watch, to be ready, to have our loins girt and our lamps prepared? Now the persuasive force of this is grounded upon the uncertainty of Christ's coming: although his coming be but once, yet if it is uncertain, the expectation of it must be continual. As indefinite commands do universally engage, so indefinite uncertain dangers are the just arguments of perpetual caution. Oh that men would be but wise, and consider, and lay aside their sins, and stand upon their guard! Wouldest thou be willing that a sudden judgment should stop thy breath while thou art a swearing, or a lying? Wouldest thou have God break in upon thee, while thou art in the loathsome embraces of a filthy whore? Wouldest thou have death come and arrest thee in the name of God, while thou art in thy cups and in thy drunkenness? Now since these sudden soul-disasters may fall out, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Who knows but within a few days a noisome disease may stop thy breath? It did so to Herod. Or perhaps an unfortunate stab send thee packing? It did so to Abner. Or perhaps a stone from the house dash out thy brains, and prove both thy death and thy sepulchre? It did so to Abimelech. These small inconsiderable things, commissioned by a Deity, are able to snap asunder the rotten thread of a weak life, and waft thee into eternity. And if thou hast not prepared a way beforehand, by concluding a solid peace with God, thou wilt find but sad welcome in the other world. Thou art indeed taken from the prison of thy body: but it is because thou art led to thy eternal execution.

And thus much concerning the second argument drawn from the uncertainty of life, compared with the necessity of the work.

III. The third argument to prove that the consideration, that the time of life is the only time of making peace with God, ought to quicken us to a speedy repentance, may be taken from considering the dismal doom that does attend those who go out of the world before their peace is made.

Now the misery and terror of this doom consists in two things. 1. That it is *inevitable*, it cannot be avoided. 2. That it is *irreversible*, it cannot be revoked. And this takes in the substance of the third doctrine, viz. that if a soul let pass this season of making its peace with God, it immediately falls into a state of irrecoverable perdition.

1. This doom is *inevitable*, it cannot be avoided. When we have to do with a strong enemy, if we cannot fly from him, we must of necessity fall by him. If we cannot outrun vengeance, we must endure it. The poor soul is now fallen into an ocean of endless misery, and if it cannot swim or bear up itself, must sink. The place of torment is before thee, and an infinite power behind thee, to drive thee into it; therefore in thou must, there is no remedy; no ways to escape, unless thou canst either outwit God or overpower him. All possibility of escaping an evil must be either by hiding one's self from it, and so keeping ourselves from that; or by repulsing it, and so keeping that from us. But either of these are impossible for thee to do, when thou art environed on this side by an omniscience, on the other by an omnipotence. We read of those that shall "cry unto the mountains to fall upon them, and to the rocks to cover them from the face of the Lamb, and of him that sitteth upon the throne," Rev. vi. 16. But, alas! what poor asylums are these, when God by his all-seeing eye can look through the mountains, and by his hand can remove them? A condemned malefactor may break the prison, and fly, and escape the punishment. But canst thou break the gates of hell? Canst thou, like a stronger Samson, carry away the door of the infernal pit? Oh! who can be strong in the day that the Lord shall thus deal with him! Admit thou couldest unfetter thyself, and break thy prison; yet thou wert not able to run from God: God has his arrows of vengeance, and canst thou outfly an arrow? To speak after the manner of men, thou hast a severe judge, and a watchful gaoler. As "he that keeps Israel," so he that imprisons thee, "does neither slumber nor sleep." He has an eagle's eye to observe, and an eagle's wing to overtake thee: there is no way to avoid him. If thou canst find the way out of the midst of utter darkness, break asunder the everlasting chains, break through the devil and his angels, and those armies of eternal woes, then mayest thou wring thyself out God's hands.

2. This doom is *irreversible*, it cannot be revoked. It is proper to any word, when once spoken, to fly away beyond all possibility of a recall; but much more to every decretory word of God, which the deliberate resolutions of an infinitely wise judge have made unchangeable. The word is gone out of God's mouth in righteousness, it shall not return; God's condemning sentence admits of no repeal. "The Strength of Israel is not a man, or the son of man, that he should repent," 1 Sam. xv. 29. The outcries of a miserable perishing man may often prevail with a man like himself, who is of the same mould, the same affections, so far as to cause an act of passion and commiseration to revoke an act of justice. But, alas! all the cravings and the wailings of a justly condemned sinner, shall be answered of God with "I know you not." All such lamentations cannot at all move a resolved Deity; they are like a vanishing voice echoing back

from a marble pillar, without making the least impression. "As the tree falls, so it lies."

If the sinner falls into destruction, there he must lie for ever without recovery. "I sink," says David, "in the mire, where there is no standing," Psalm lxix. 2. What he says of his affliction, a lost soul may say of his perdition; that it sinks deeper and deeper, it cannot so much as arrive to a stand, much less to a return. A man, while he is yet falling from some high place, is not able to stop or to recover himself, much less can he be able, when he is actually fallen. Even the heathen poet, from those imperfect notions that the heathens had of the future misery of lost sinners, could acknowledge the descent to hell easy, but the return impossible: *Facilis descensus Averni: sed revocare gradum*, &c. It is a rule in philosophy, that from a total privation to the habit, there can be no regress. So after a total loss of God's love and presence, there is no possibility of re-obtaining it. For put the case that it were possible, yet who should solicit and seek out thy pardon, and get thy sentence reversed? It must be either God, or angels, or men. First, it cannot be God the Father, for he is thy angry judge, and therefore cannot be thy advocate. Nor God the Son, for him thou hast crucified afresh, and his offers of redemption are only upon the scene of this life. "He prays not for the world," John xvii. 9, that is, for the wicked world; then much less for the condemned world. The Spirit will not intercede for thee; for him thou hast often grieved, and frustrated all the methods of his workings. Now good angels cannot present a petition for thee, for it is as much their work and business to glorify God in the destruction of the wicked, as in the salvation of the righteous. The devils are the instruments of thy misery, and thy tormentors will never prove thy intercessors. As for men, those that are saved are the approvers, and those that are condemned are the companions of thy misery; but neither can be thy helpers. Perpetual therefore must thy perdition needs be, when both the Creator and all his creatures are concerned either to advance, or at least to rejoice over thy destruction. O let every sinner, that is yet on this side the pit, carry this in his more serious thoughts, Psalm xlix. 8, "The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." The loss of time, and the loss of a soul, is irrecoverable.

All the application I shall make shall be to urge over the same duty enjoined in the text upon the score of another argument, and that also couched in the words, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way;" yea, for this very reason, because thou art in the way. "As long as there is life, there is hope," we say: and so, as long as there is the enjoyment of a temporal life, there may be just hope of an eternal. These days of thy respite, they are golden days: every hour presents thee with salvation; every day lays heaven and

happiness at thy door. Wherefore go forth, and meet thy adversary; do not fly off and say, "There is a lion in the way;" that he is austere, and hard to be appeased. No, he does not come clothed with thunder and terror, but with all the sweetness and inviting tenderness that mercy itself can put on. Thou hast a friendly enemy, one whose bowels yearn over thee; for although of all others he is, if unreconciled, the most terrible; so to be reconciled he is the most willing. While with one hand he shakes his rod at thee for departing from him, with the other he graciously beckons to thee to return. And if thou canst so far relent, as to endeavour it; believe it, he is ready to meet thee half way: he did so to the prodigal.

O consider then this thy inestimable advantage, that thou art yet in the way, yet in a possibility, nay in a probability of reconcilement. Thou art not put to sue for terms of peace, but only to accept of those that are freely offered and prepared to thy hand. Close in with such a potent adversary; it is thy wisdom, thy eternal interest, thy life; thou mayest so carry the business as to turn thy enemy into thy Saviour. Wherefore take that excellent advice of the Spirit, with which I shall conclude; Psalm ii. ult. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the way."

SERMON XVI.

ON THE LOVE OF HUMAN APPLAUSE AS A MOTIVE TO VIRTUE.

MATTHEW XXIII. 5.

But all their works they do for to be seen of men.

IT is strange to consider the great difference both of the principle and quality of most of those actions that in the world carry the same reputation. Of this we have here a notable instance in a sect of men amongst the Jews called the pharisees; who made as glorious an appearance and had as high a vogue for piety as the best. Their righteousness and good works so glistered, that they even dashed the judging faculties of those who judged more by seeing than by weighing: and doubtless they were in show so exactly good, that no argument from appearance could decide the difference.

And yet like those trees which are fair and flourishing at the top from the dung that lies at the root, the principle of all these good works was a sinful appetite, an appetite of glory, an ambitious desire; sinful perhaps in itself, but certainly so in its application to such a design. Yet, however sinful it was in the nature of an appetite, we see it was very strong and operative in the nature of a principle; and such a one as wrought men to great heights in the outward and splendid side of religion.

My design at this time is from these words to inquire into the force of this principle in reference to a virtuous and religious life; and to show how far it is able to engage men in it.

And this I shall do under these four heads:

I. I shall show that a love of glory is sufficient to produce all those virtuous actions that are visible in the lives of those that profess religion.

II. I shall show whence this affection comes to have such an influence upon our actions.

III. I shall show the inability of it to be a sufficient motive to engage mankind in virtuous actions, without the assistance of religion.

IV. I shall show that even those actions that it does produce are yet of no value at all in the sight of God.

I. For the first of these, *That the love of glory is able to produce all those virtuous actions that are visible in the lives of those that profess religion.*

1. This I prove first from this, that it actually has produced

them, and therefore it is able to produce them: for this, let the noblest and most virtuous of the heathens be an instance; whose outward virtues few Christians equal, but none transcend: yet they were acted in all, by a thirst of that glory that followed those performances. For into what will you resolve the industry of the philosophers, the chastity of Scipio and Alexander, the liberality of Augustus, the severity of Cato, the integrity of Fabricius, but into a desire of being famous for each of these perfections. See what a round and open profession of this Tully makes in his defence of Archias the poet! We know he had behaved himself with great virtue and resolution in the behalf of his country against Clodius and Catiline; but what induced him? Was it either love of the virtuous action itself, or hopes to gain by it a better place in their Elysium? Nor he nor any of the wiser sort believed any such thing. Juvenal tells you, *vix pueri credunt.* But what was it then? Why he tells you, that if he had not grown up in persuasion from his youth, that nothing was earnestly to be desired in this life but praise and honour, he would never have exposed himself to those enmities, dangers, and oppositions, that he underwent in the prosecution of his country's defence.

And after that he had proved that other great men acted upon the same principle;—for how came they else to be so fond of poets and historians, the great instruments and propagators of their fame?—he then gathers up all into this general conclusion; *Nullam virtus aliam mercedem laborum periculorumque desiderat præter hanc laudis et gloriæ: quâ quidem detractâ, quid est quod in hoc tam exiguo vitæ curriculo, et tam brevi, tantis nos in laboribus exerceamus?* You see now the springhead from whence streamed all the splendid and renowned moral actions of these persons.

Nay, in persons of a much inferior rank and apprehension, we have the same principle working them to a degree of abstinence equal to the greatest austerities and instances of mortification seen now-a-days in persons religious. Those that used to run and wrestle in the public games, what strange abridgments did they suffer both as to the kind and measure of their food; what abstinence from wine and women, and all other luxury, did they constantly tie themselves up to? The apostle Paul gives them this testimony in 1 Cor. ix. 25, "Every man that striveth for mastery is temperate in all things:" and that with such a strict and rigorous exactness, that many who now-a-days profess Christianity, would not deny their appetites half so much to gain a kingdom in this world, or the world to come, as the apostle says those persons did to gain a corruptible crown; that is, some pitiful garland, ready to wither and to be blasted by the breath of those applauses that attended the putting of it on.

But further, that even in those that profess religion, religion is not always the commanding, producing principle of their best actions, the very example of the pharisees will demonstrate. For

what almost could be outwardly done which these men did not do, with great advantage, pomp, and solemnity of performance? They were frequent in prayer, they gave alms, they were exact in their tithings even to mint and cummin: they sat in the seat of Moses, and taught sometimes so well, that Christ, in the third verse of this Matt. xxiii., charges his disciples, that whatsoever they bid them, they should observe and do: and for their zeal, they would undertake the expense and toil of compassing sea and land, to gain one proselyte to their religion. In a word, they had gained such a reputation for their piety, that it was a common saying amongst the Jews, that if but two men in the world should be saved, one of them would a pharisee. Now let any one show me where amongst us there is such a face of religion and concernment for it. You will say, perhaps, that the truth and body of it may be among us; but certainly, it is a strange thing to see a body without a face, and reality without any show. There is a difference indeed between the substance and the shadow, yet there is seldom a substance without the shadow. But this by digression.

We have seen what the pharisees did; but what was the first moving cause that bore them up to such a pitch of acting? Why, that they might be talked of and admired; in a word, that they might be seen of men. They gave alms, indeed, but it was with trumpets and proclamations. They prayed, but it was standing in the streets, with a design more to be seen here below, than to be heard above. They fasted; but then they disfigured themselves, wore a sad countenance and a drooping head, that they might gain notice and observation, and so feed their ambition. They pretended great zeal to the law, but carried it more in their phylacteries than their hearts; and in the borders of their garments more than their lives. All their teaching was in order to be called Rabbi, to be treated with public and pompous salutations; to be cringed to in solemn meetings; to be at the top of every public feast and assembly. The whole design of all that pageantry and show of piety that they amuse the world withal, was nothing but noise, and vogue, and popularity: this was the breath that blew up their devotion to such a high and a blazing flame.

And are not many Christians, though differing from them in religion, yet the very same men? and owe all those shows and forms of godliness, which they have clothed themselves withal, to the influence of the same spurious principle? How many appear devout, and zealous, and frequent in the service of God, only to court the esteem of the world, or perhaps to acquit themselves to the eye of a superior!

How vast a distance is there between their inside and their outside: between the same men as they open themselves in private, and as they sustain an artificial dress or person in public!

The reason is, because, though they have not goodness enough to be religious, yet they have pride enough to appear so.

2. That the love of glory is sufficient to produce all those virtuous actions that are visible in the lives of those that profess religion, appears further from hence; that there is nothing visible in the very best actions, but what may proceed from the most depraved principles, if acted by prudence, caution, and design. And if piety be not requisite to their production, I am sure the next principle, for influence and activity, is a man's concernment for his reputation.

Now that a principle, short of piety, is able to exert the fairest performances that bear the name of pious, is clear from this; that there is no external discrimination of the hypocrite from the sincere person: what one does, the same is done by the other. He that should see a stone that is shot from a sling, and a bird fly in the air at the same time, were he ignorant of their nature, could not, by any mark of discovery inherent in the motions themselves, know one to be natural, and the other to be violent. And Christ pronounces, that in the great day of discovery, "many that are first shall be last;" that is, those who had the highest esteem for piety, grounded upon the gloss of an outwardly virtuous behaviour, shall be found to have had but little reality, and so be rewarded accordingly.

This, therefore, being proved, who can deny but a sense of honour, and a touch of ambition, may supply the room of a better principle in those outward instances of virtue, that shine only upon the surface of men's lives, yet sufficient to attract the estimation of those who can look no further?

We know designs much inferior to this, are able to bear a man up to such a pitch. The designs of gain, which are the lowest and basest that can be, and put a man upon the most sordid and inferior practices; yet these are able to inspire him with such an impetus, as is able to raise him to a show of piety: so that the vilest person shall appear godly, when, in a literal sense, he shall find that "godliness is great gain."

Nay, the design of pleasure and sensuality may make a man undergo many religious austerities, and sacrifice a less pleasure to the hope of a greater. For in the great instance of mortification, which is fasting, what were all the fasts and humiliations of the late reformers, but the forbearing of dinners? that is, the enlarging the stowage, and the redoubling the appetite, for a larger supper; in which the dinner was rather deferred than taken away.

But now the design of glory is as much above these, as the mind of a Cæsar above the mind of a farmer or a usurer; or the applauses of the learned and the knowing, above the entertainments of a kitchen. And therefore, if those ignoble appetites were able to advance a man to so high a strain; certainly the

other, which has the same activity, and a greater nobility, must needs do it much more. And thus much for the first thing.

II. I come now to the second, which is to show *whence this affection comes to have such an influence upon our actions.*

The reasons, I conceive, may be these.

1. Because glory is the proper pleasure of the mind. That which pleases is, by the Latins, called *jucundum:* and I find this *jucundum*, by a certain author of some repute in the world, divided into that of the body, and that of the mind. That of the body is properly the perception of those pleasing objects that respectively belong to the five senses; but that of the mind he affirms to be glory: which, I think, may be properly defined or described, The complacency that a man finds within himself, arising from his conceit of the opinion that another has of some excellency or perfection in him. For as pride is the opinion that a man has of his own perfection, so glory is the pleasure that he takes from the opinion that another has of it. And experience shows, that the perception of harmonious sounds do not more please the ear, nor sweet things the taste, than the opinion of this does affect and please the mind. It was the speech of Dionysius, concerning his parasites and flatterers, that though he knew that what they said was false, yet he could not but find himself pleased with it. And Themistocles, being pointed at in the public theatres and meetings, confessed that the pleasure he took in it did amply reward all those great exploits that he had done for his country.

Now that this so intimately affects the mind with pleasure, appears from the great regret and trouble that the mind feels from its contrary, which is scorn and disgrace. There is nothing that pierces the apprehensive mind so keenly and intolerably as this. It depresses the spirits, restrains the freedom, and contracts the largeness of the thoughts. A man that is under disgrace neither relishes the returns of business, nor the enjoyments of society; but desponds, and suffers himself to be trampled upon and contemned by persons much worse than himself.

From whence it follows, since glory so much enamours, and disgrace so much afflicts the soul of man, that it is no wonder, if the acquiring of one, and the avoiding of the other, so potently commands all our actions. For what are actions, but the servants of our appetites? And what are all the labours of men laid out upon, but to acquire to themselves such objects as either please their senses, or gratify their more noble desires.

And certainly there are some tempers in the world, that can sit up as late, and rise as early, and endure as much trouble, to purchase the pleasure of their mind, as others do for that of the senses. Sallust, in the character that he gives of Lucius Sylla the dictator, amongst other things sets down this, and it is for

his commendation, that he was *voluptatum cupidus, sed gloriæ cupidior:* though he loved his cups and his women too well, yet still he commanded them as well as his army; and had rather court honour, with the hardships and dangers of the field, and with hunger and thirst, and toilsome watchings, arrive at length to the glories of a triumph.

And no wonder; for the pleasures that lie in the gratifications of the senses, are transient, and short, and perishing, as those gratifications are themselves; but the pleasure of a glorious object is lasting; it is treasured up in the memory, and the mind may have recourse to it as often as it will. He that eats a luscious morsel, or sees a fine picture, is pleased as long as he tastes the one, or beholds the other, which perhaps is a minute: but he that has done a glorious action, reflects upon it with pleasure to his dying day; it is as sure to him as his life or his being; it lasts and lives, and supplies the mind with continual fresh perceptions, with all the delights of an active remembrance and a busy reflection.

The same also holds in the contrary of glory, which is disgrace, compared to all those pains that afflict the body, which are afflictive just so long as they actually possess the part which they aggrieve; but their influence lasts no longer than their presence. Nobody is, therefore, in pain to-day, because his head ached a month ago: nobody feels the torments of a cured gout, nor languishes with the remembrance of a removed sickness. Nay, he is rather so much the more refreshed, by how much a former pain gives a man a quicker sense of his present ease.

But it is otherwise in the afflictions of dishonour: this, wheresoever it fastens, leaves its marks behind it. It torments the mind with an abiding anguish. A man cannot lay it down; it incorporates into his condition. It is a pain not to be slept away, and a scar not to be worn off. He eats, he travels, he lies down and rises up with it. It is an emblem of hell, irksome and perpetual.

And being so, we need seek for no further cause why these affections so entirely command a man, as to every faculty both of body and soul. A man would do any thing to secure his honour and his reputation; that is, to live while he is alive, and not to be the scorn and laughing-stock of a company of worthless, pitiful, and contemptible persons, who have nothing else to make them seem honourable, so much as in their own esteem, but the disgraces of others.

2. The second reason, that this affection of glory comes to have so strong an influence upon our actions, is from this; that it is founded in the innate desire of superiority that is in every man. One man desires to be greater and better than another, and consequently to be thought so. Nature has placed us in the lower region of the world, but for all that we aspire; it has cast us upon the earth, but still we rebound.

If it be here demanded, whence this desire arises, and upon what it is founded; I answer, that it is founded upon the very natural love that we bear to our being, and the preservation of it. For every degree of superiority, or greater perfection, is a further defence set upon a man's being: as he that is powerful, rich, wise, or the like, has those means of securing his being, that he, who is destitute of power, riches, and wisdom, has not. So much as any man is above another, so much he thinks himself safer than another.

But now it is the great effect of glory and fame thus to raise a man: hence the very word, by which we express the praising of one, is to *extol* him; that is, to *lift* him up: for honour properly sets a man above the crowd; it makes him, like Saul, higher by the head than the rest of his brethren.

Hereupon, since the desire of superiority is such a restless affection, engaging a man in the highest and hardest attempts; and since the desire of glory is grafted upon it, and indeed is subservient to it; it is a matter of no hard resolution to find out, whence the desire of glory comes to exercise such a control over us, as to compel us to do this, abstain from that, endure another thing, and that with such success, as to carry its commands victorious through any reluctances whatsoever.

For what is it that makes the practice of religion irksome and difficult, but that it thwarts the inferior appetites of sense? which being thwarted, will be sure to make a considerable opposition. But now, if an appetite stronger and more active than those of sense strikes in with religion, it will render its conquest over them easy and effectual: and such a one I affirm to be the appetite of glory; which certainly rules more or less in every one who has not degenerated into a brute so far as to have fastened his designs to the earth, and his desires to his trencher.

But besides a desire of superiority, there is also a desire of greatness (for I know no other name to give it) which is equally predominant in men, and equally served and promoted by fame and honour: for does not this, as it were, diffuse a man, and extend him to the wideness and capacity of the world? That little bulk that is contained in this or that room, in its fame carries a circumference greater and larger than a nation. Glory makes a man present in ten thousand places at once, and gives him a kind of ubiquity, and that without labour or motion: while he sits still he travels over the universe; he crosses the seas, and yet never passes the continent; he visits all nations, and perhaps never stirs abroad. But his fame, like lightning, makes him shine from one end of the heavens to the other. No wonder therefore, since glory itself is able thus to stretch a man to a kind of omnipresence, if the desire of glory has over his life and actions a kind of omnipotence.

3. The third and last reason that I shall assign, why this affec-

tion of glory comes to have such an influence upon our actions, is, because it is indeed the great instrument of life to have a fair reputation, and really opens a man a way into all the advantages of it. For who would employ a profane person, or trust a known atheist? And he that is counted neither fit to be employed or trusted, may go out of the world, for he is like to find but little happiness in it. The repute of a man's principles, his conscience and honesty, is that which represents a man worthy to be used and preferred: and the repute of a man's principles grows out of the external fairness of his practices.

All the accommodations of life, as power, wealth, offices, and friends, are often derivable from the good opinion that men have procured themselves by the outward and seeming piety of their behaviour. For the proof of which, take but the instance of the late times: more than a show of piety I think none will allow them, that well understood them; but a show they had, and so wisely did they manage it, that the opinion which the vulgar had of their saintship, was such an engine in their hands, that by it they could turn and wield them to all their designs and purposes as they pleased. They plundered, and oppressed, and robbed men of their estates: yes, but they did it preaching and praying, and abstaining from swearing, drinking, and the like; and composing themselves to the rigours of an appearing virtue and sobriety. Not but that they had an appetite to have lashed out into all that looseness, gawdery, and debauchery, that sometimes bewitches other men; but they were too wise; they knew that would have vilified their persons, and consequently have dashed their designs: their villany was sober, and therefore successful. And I am afraid that experience is like to convince us, that the face of a dissembled piety gave them a greater credit and authority with the generality, than others are like to gain by a better cause managed with seemingly worse manners. So much does the appearance, the opinion, and the noise of things govern the world!

Let this therefore pass for another great cause, why the affection of glory so engages and rules the practices of men, viz. that it does indeed serve a real interest, and is resolved into the *utile*, the idol of profit so much adored by mankind. It is to very great purpose for a man to be esteemed; for he that is so, will at length be something more. Fame is indeed but a breath and a wind; yet even the wind is that which carries the ship, and brings the treasure into the merchant's bosom.

And thus much for the second general head proposed for the handling of the words, viz. to show whence this affection comes to have such an influence upon men's actions.

III. Pass we now to the third; which is to show *the inability of it to be a sufficient motive to engage mankind in virtuous actions without the assistance of religion.*

In order to the proof of which, I shall premise two considerations.

1. That virtue and a good life determines not in outward practices, but respects the most inward actions of the mind. Virtue dwells not upon the tongue, nor consists in the due motion of the hands and the feet: but it is the action of the soul, and there it resides. Whatsoever we behold of it in the external behaviour of men is but the manifestation, not the being of virtue; as the action of the body is not the principle, but only the discovery of life. They are inward secret wheels, that set the outward and the visible a-work.

Piety lodges in the regions of the heart; and when the body is immured in prison, or withered by sickness, an active soul feels none of those impediments, but is free to the exercise of virtue or vice; and by inward volitions or aversations can supply the want of outward performances.

A man may act like a saint before men, and like a devil before God; and on the contrary appear but mean outwardly, and yet be all-glorious within. Otherwise virtue would be but an outside, and sit but as a varnish upon the forehead; and he that looked upon the body, would be as competent a judge of it, as he that searched the heart. But colour is not health; he that looks pale, may be sound and vigorous; and he that wears the rose upon his cheeks, may have rottenness in his bones.

Virtue and vice are the perfection and pollution of the soul; that is, of a being in its nature spiritual, and consequently invisible; whereupon they must be such also themselves. The scene of their acting is the conscience; and conscience has an eye over a man's most inward and retired behaviour; it spies out the first infant essays and inclinations of virtues, and encourages them, and discerns the first movings and ebullitions of concupiscence, and severely checks and condemns them. And thus it judges of a man's estate before ever the soul comes to communicate with the body, in the external production of any of those actions; and so to alarm the notice and observation of the world.

So that a man is indeed condemned before the world knows him to be an offender, and has made a very great progress in sin before he comes to execute and declare it by visible practices. But yet the man is a vile person, a stranger to virtue and goodness, as well when he is concealed, as when the light shows him to a public detestation. The swine is as filthy when he lies close in his sty, as when he comes forth, and shakes his nastiness in the street. Let this therefore be the first previous consideration, that virtue and vice chiefly respect the inward invisible behaviours of the soul.

2. The second consideration is this: that the principle of honour or glory governs a man's actions entirely by the judg-

ment and opinion of the world concerning them. The grand proposals, that a man acted by this principle makes to himself upon every undertaking, and which either licenses or rescinds his designed action, is, What will the world say of me, if I do thus or thus? He never says, Is it pious, or generous, or suitable to a rational soul? or is it contrary to all these, and unbecoming the strictness of the religion I profess, and the ingenuity of being really what I am thought to be? Is it such an action as would blush in the dark, and needs not the sun and the day to discover its deformity?

No, these are none of the questions, or the demurs, that such a one troubles himself withal; if the action be safe and secret, let it be dirty, and ill-favoured. All actions, he thinks, are the same, and are discriminated with these different appellations by custom, by received prejudices, and common opinion. And if he can but secure himself as to these, he may enjoy the reputation of virtue, while he reaps the sweetness of his vice.

Now these two considerations premised, I affirm that the principle of honour is utterly insufficient to engage and argue men into the practice of virtue, in these following cases.

(1.) When by ill customs and perverse discourses a vice comes to have a reputation, or at least no disreputation in the judgment of a nation; and that this so falls out sometimes is evident. Some nations have allowed of simple fornication; some have so far perverted that which we call nature, as to count it lawful, nay, laudable for a son to have his own mother in marriage, as Quintus Curtius reports of some of the Persians. The Lacedemonians would commend and reward their children when they could thieve and rob dexterously. Many have counted self-murder in many cases an heroic action, and becoming a man of courage and philosophy. For a son to defraud his parents, and to give that which he purloined from them, or at least withheld from them in their indigence and necessity, to holy uses, was in the judgment of our Saviour a great sin, and a perversion of the divine law: yet the Pharisees from Moses' chair authorized it, as hugely suitable to that law, and an action of sublime devotion.

Now that the forementioned practices were highly unlawful, and inconsistent with piety and virtue, is most certain; yet passing current in the world by public warrant, and the countenance of general use, I demand upon what rational ground any man, acted by a bare principle of honour, could be kept from them, if either his inclination or convenience prompted him to them? That which he was only a slave to, the opinion and vogue of the world, that could not withhold him, for that would own and credit him in the practice; and any other restraint upon him besides this, we suppose to be none.

But now, God would have made but very short provisions to engage men in duty, if he had not bound it upon them by such

a principle, as should universally be able to oblige them in all cases, and in all circumstances of condition, in which it concerned them to be virtuous, and to abhor and shun the contrary vices. But it is clear, that a man's tenderness of his honour cannot be that principle; for that looks only upon what is allowed and countenanced: but sin is sin, and consequently damnable, whether custom revenges it with a gibbet, or adorns it with a garland. And the divine tribunal will punish an incestuous Persian, a pilfering Lacedemonian, a self-murdering Roman or Athenian, and an undutiful Jew, as much as it would a person guilty of these crimes in any of those nations, where they are cried down, detested, and revenged by the hand of public justice; did not the infamy of such actions in those places, by accident state the guilt of the persons that committed them under a higher aggravation.

And this, in my judgment, may be one reason amongst others, why God is so severely angry at national sins; or such sins as have at least an influence upon the manners of a nation, though committed by a few persons, viz. that by this means there is a reputation given to sin, and the shame that God has annexed to it, in a great measure taken from it: for nothing is shameful that is fashionable. And when a thing comes to be practised by all, or by such as are eminent, public, and leading persons, it gains credit, and easily passes into a fashion.

But now by this, one of the great instruments by which Providence governs the societies of men, and controls the course of sin, is made utterly frustrate to this purpose. This instrument is the shame that attends upon base and wicked actions; a great curb to the fury of some men's inclinations, and consequently a great mound and bank against that torrent of villany, that would otherwise break in upon society: for the better understanding of which, we must observe, that as God, in the great work of governing the world, has several purposes upon several men, so he effects those purposes by several means.

Some men he intends to save, and to prepare for another world, and their hearts he renews and changes by a supernatural, ineffable, and prevailing operation of his grace. But others he intends only to civilize, and to fit them to converse in this world; and these he governs, not by any supernatural change wrought upon them, but by the principles of natural affections, as fear, shame, and the like; which shall suit them to society, by restraining their extravagant and furious appetites within bounds and measures. And of all these principles, there is none such a bridle in the jaws of an unregenerate person, as the dread of shame upon the commission of things unlawful and indecent. But now, if custom and countenance takes off the shame, and paints the Jezebel, and gives a gloss and a reputation to a vile action, why this cord is snapped asunder; and the principle of

honour can be no argument to keep a man from a creditable villany, and a splendid sin.

If to have been a rebel is no shame, provided a man be rich, potent, or factious; and to have been loyal is no honour; but to be poor, though loyalty were the cause of it, is a great dishonour; I would fain know, what principles of honour could engage a man to draw his sword in his prince's defence, or tie his hands when it lies fair for his advantage to rebel. Nothing but conscience and a sense of duty can have any obliging influence upon him in this case; for all arguments from credit or reputation dissolve, and break, and vanish into air.

Now certainly the thought of this should add caution to the behaviour of persons of eminence, and such as sit at the top of affairs, and attract the eyes of a nation: for their practice of any sin leaves a colour, and imprints a kind of an authority upon it; so that the shame of it comes at length to be taken away, and with that the strongest dissuasive that averts the natural ingenuity of man from vile and enormous practices.

And this is the first case in which a principle of honour, without the aid of religion, is insufficient to engage men in the practice of virtue, viz. when the contrary vice comes in the general judgment of a people to lose its infamy and disrepute.

2. Another case, in which the same principle is insufficient for the same purpose, is, when a man can pursue his vice secretly and indiscernibly; and that he may do two ways.

(1.) When he entertains it in his thoughts, affections, and desires. These are the cabinet councils of the soul, and it is certain that God does not take his estimate of a man from any thing so much as from the regular or irregular behaviour of these: for as a man thinks or desires in his heart, such indeed he is; for then most truly, because most incontrollably, he acts himself.

But now, if a man shall take a pleasure to gratify and cherish a corrupt humour, by the services of fancy, and desire, and imagination, representing to it suitable sinful objects; why he knows himself out of the reach, and consequently out of the awe of any moral inspection; there is no prying into the transactions of thought, no overhearing the whispers of fancy, no getting into the little close cabals of desires and affections, when they contrive and reflect upon their own pleasures, and laugh at all external spectators. And if so, what influence can the care of credit and honour have upon them, which only regards and fears those eyes that can look no further than the body? The credit of any action is safe, where it is not discerned; for as no vicious person, though ever so slavishly tender of his credit, would be afraid to do an indecent thing before a blind man, or to speak indecent words before the deaf; so the greatest enormities may be securely thought over, and desired even in the concourse of theatres, and the face of the world.

(2.) The other instance of a man's pursuing his vice secretly is, when though it passes from desire into practice, yet it is acted with such circumstances of external concealment, that it is out of the notice and arbitration of all observers. This, I confess, from the very nature of the thing, is not altogether so secure as the former; yet it is sufficient to render all checks or restraints from credit utterly inefficacious.

There is none indeed who loves his sin so well, as to dare to own the satisfaction of it in the market-place, in a church, or upon an exchange; common sense of honour is able to overrule the luxuriances of vice upon these occasions and places: for there is no generally condemned practice so impudent, as to desire to be public, to be gazed and pointed at, and run down by a universal outcry and detestation.

But when a man has contrived and cast the commission of his sin into such opportunities of darkness and retirement, that in the sinful satisfaction of his flesh, he acts as invisibly as if he was a spirit; what stop can the fear of shame give to him in such practices? For shame never reaches beyond sight, and we suppose the sinner now to have placed himself out of the eye of every thing but of omniscience and of conscience; which also, in the present case, we suppose him not to fear.

For he that has no principle to withhold him from villany but the dread of infamy, has no God but public opinion, and no conscience but his own convenience. And therefore, having by much dress, and secresy, and dissimulation, as it were periwigged his sin, and covered his shame, he looks after no other innocence but concealment, nor counts any thing a sin, provided it be a work of darkness; nor cares to be thought a sheep for any other purpose, but that he may act the wolf, and worry with more reputation.

And thus I have shown the cases in which a bare principle of honour, unassisted by religion, has no efficacy at all to engage men in virtuous practices: in a word, he that does all such works, only that he may be seen of men, will do none when he is sure that he cannot be seen. But now, before I proceed any further, I cannot but add this withal, that honour is the strongest motive that mere nature has to enforce virtue by; so that if this is found feeble and impotent, and inferior to so great a purpose, it is in vain to attempt such a superstructure upon any weaker foundation.

It is possible indeed, that some tempers have so degenerated, as to be acted by principles much inferior, when arguments from honour make no impression upon them at all: as there are some who follow no lure like that of gain; and others, who are tempted by no bait like that of pleasure. But for the first of these, the desire of gain is but the quality of some men, or at least but of some ages; for youth is little prevailed upon by it:

so that this is an unfit instrument of virtue, the motive to which ought to be universal. And for designs of pleasure, they cannot constantly carry the mind to virtuous practices; because when those designs arrive to enjoyment, such enjoyments are for the most part contrary to a virtuous course, which is never more exercised, than in the severities of abstinence and great abridgments. These principles therefore are unable to effect that, in which the principle of honour is deficient.

Concerning which, it is to be observed, that I take it not only in the positive sense, according to which honour is a desire of a further degree and access to a man's reputation; but also, nay chiefly, in the negative sense, as it imports an abhorrency of shame. Now though the former of these is principally notable in minds of a more noble and refined mould, vulgar tempers being seldom concerned to heighten and propagate their fame; yet the latter sense of honour, as it is a flying from shame, seems universally to have fixed itself in the breasts of all mankind: there being no man in his wits, of so sottishly depressed a soul, as to endure to be trampled, spit upon, and avoided like a walking infection, without a strange grief, anguish, and inward resentment. But however, that this also is short of being a universal engagement to virtue, the precedent arguments have sufficiently evinced.

IV. I proceed now to the fourth and last particular, viz. to show *that even those actions that a principle of honour does produce, are of no value in the sight of God;* and that upon the account of a double defect: 1. In respect of the cause from which they flow. 2. In respect of the end to which they are directed.

1. And first of all, they are deficient in respect of their producing cause, which should be a real love to virtue itself, upon the score of its worth and excellency; otherwise they are forced and violent, and proceed only upon the apprehension of a present interest, which when it ceases, the fountain of such actions is dried up, and then the actions themselves must needs fail.

But when the heart is carried forth to duty, by an inward vital principle of love to the thing it practises, it renders every such performance free and connatural to the soul, and consequently of value in the sight of God, who in every action requires not only what it is, but whence it comes; and never accepts the bare deed, but as it is animated and spiritualized by the desire. But interest and design are a kind of force upon the soul, bearing a man oftentimes besides the ducture of his native propensities, and the first outgoings of his will. But the fruits of righteousness grow not in such forced soils; and a man never acts piously according to the measures of the gospel, but when his action becomes also his inclination.

If care of my credit brings my body to church, when, in the mean time, my choice and my will places me either at the table of the epicure, or in the embraces of a harlot, will God, think we, value this shadow and surface of devotion, and be satisfied with the attendance of the body, when the free, natural, uncontrolled flight of my desires has carried away my soul to an infinite distance from it? Yet honour can command only the former; but the spirit, with which only he that is a Spirit will be served, is wholly out of its reach and dominion.

2. All actions of virtue, performed from a principle of honour, are deficient in respect of the end to which they are directed. This end is self; whereas it should be the glory of God, a thing diametrically, irreconcileably opposed to it. God's displeasure is never so high as when it arrives to jealousy; and then God is properly jealous, when he finds that man thrusts his own glory into the place of his; which he never does more, than when he makes the divine worship the instrument and engine of his own reputation, and uses piety only as a handmaid to fame, and a convenient means to slide him into the esteem and acceptance of the world. This is properly for a man, instead of serving God, to make God serve him.

But it is great reason, that a servant, whose condition declares him not his own, but another's, should be concerned only to serve the interest and occasions of his lord; and then, certainly, the creature much more who stands accountable to God, not only upon the score of his inferiority, but his very existence and production. But he that employs all his actions for the advance of his own glory, has renounced the condition of a creature and a servant, sets up for himself, becomes his own master, and, what is more, his own god.

It was for the two forementioned defects, that the most sublime moral performances of the heathen have always been arraigned and condemned by Christian divinity; namely, that they proceeded from a heart unrenewed and unsanctified, and so under the pollutions of original pravity; and withal, were designed only to derive a reputation and fair esteem upon their names and persons, to make so many glorious pages in their story, or so many glittering epitaphs upon their monuments. Thus were managed their best actions. But whether an arrow be shot from an ill bow, or levelled and directed by a false aim, it must both ways equally miss of the mark.

Now, from the subject hitherto discoursed of, by way of corrollary and conclusion, I shall infer these two things.

1. First, the worth and the absolute necessity of religion in the world, even as to the advantages of civil society. I have shown how weak, and short, and insignificant, as to these effects, the best and noblest principle, that grows upon the stock of bare

nature, will be found. It is not able to abash a secret sinner; and yet the greatest and the most mischievous villanies of the world are contrived in darkness and concealment. But religion never leaves a man without a thousand witnesses, and that in his own breast: it places him under a perpetual awe of that justice that sees in secret, and rewards openly. The religious man carries those principles and persuasions about him, that tie him up from those practices, to which his interest, and the eye of the world, would let him loose. It is he alone that uses the night only for the necessities of nature, and scorns it as a covering; that dares venture his heart upon his forehead; and, in a word, is not afraid to be seen.

But now let any one tell me, what hold can be taken of an atheist in these opportunities of secresy. His principles are as large and wide as hell itself. What can make him restore a trust, if he can safely and dexterously conceal it? What can make him true to his prince, his friend, or any relation of human life, if his reputation conspire with his advantage so as to serve one, without endangering the other?

Surely there is no such pest to society as such a person, who owns no concernment beyond himself; but having shaken off the bonds of those principles and persuasions by which mankind are governed, and by which they are, as it were, put upon equal grounds, in reference to a common intercourse, he ought to be exterminated like a wolf or a tiger, and as a common enemy to human converse: for such is the scope that the atheist gives himself, that nothing can keep him from doing his neighbour mischief, but shame or impossibility.

2. The other thing that we infer from the precedent discourse is the inexcusableness of those persons who, professing religion, yet live below a principle much inferior to religion. We need not repair to Christianity for arguments to run down a drunkard, a swearer, a noted adulterer, or a rebel. A generous heathenism, ruled by maxims of credit and shame, is virtue and piety, compared to the lives of such Christians. Self-love, acted by prudence and caution, is enough to mortify and shame such enormities out of the world. Nothing but grace can extinguish sin; but honour and discretion is enough to prevent scandal. He is a fool that says but in his heart, "There is no God;" but he is sottishly and incorrigibly so, who proclaims such a belief by the open and visible actions of his life.

He that pursues his vice notoriously, has not so much religion as the fear of men would suggest to the discourses of an ordinary reason. To perjure one's self publicly, to talk obscenely or profanely in company, it may be condemned out of the lives of the pharisees, and the writings of Cicero or Seneca: it is to be short of that perfection, which will carry many to hell, viz. a form of godliness. It is to have all the venom and malignity without the

wisdom of the serpent: for surely no wise atheist ever in his discourse thought it becoming to speak irreverently of God, or to scoff at religion.

Those who do so, have cause to make this prayer, if ever they make any, that God would give them so much discretion as to fit them for this life, since he denies them grace to prepare them for a better.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

2 Cor. i. 24.

For by faith ye stand.

There can be none here ignorant, that the great evangelical virtue so frequently spoken of, so highly commended, and upon which the whole weight of man's salvation leans and depends, is faith; a thing more usually discoursed of by divines than explained, and consequently more easily taken up by their hearers than understood; there being scarce any, who will not with much zeal and vehemence pretend to it, and by all means wear the reputation of the name, though they are wholly strangers to the nature of the thing. For it being the great and glorious badge of the citizens of heaven, the sons of God, and heirs of immortality; it is no wonder if every man has his mouth open, to profess and boast of his faith; and those possibly the most loudly of all others, who entertain it only in opposition to good works.

But that I may give some account of the nature of it, I shall observe that the scripture makes mention of three several sorts of faith.

1. The first is a faith of simple credence, or bare assent; acknowledging and assenting to the historical truth of every thing delivered in God's word. And such a faith is not here meant: for the devils may have it; who, the apostle St. James tells us, in ch. ii. 19, "believe and tremble." They own all the word of God for a most certain undoubted truth; but the devils' faith is very consistent with the devils' damnation. He that believes well, may live ill: and a good belief will not save, when a bad life condemns.

2. The second sort, is a temporary faith, and (as I may so call it) a faith of conviction. Such a one as by the present convincing force of the word is wrought in the heart, and for a time raises and carries out the soul to some short sallies and attempts in the course of godliness; nevertheless, having no firm fixation in the heart, but being only like the short and sudden issue of a forced ground, it quickly faints and sinks, and comes to nothing, leaving the soul many leagues short of a true and thorough change of its estate.

3. The third and last sort, and which here only is intended, is a saving effectual faith, wrought in the soul by a sound and real

work of conversion. It takes in both the former kinds, and superadds its own peculiar perfection besides. And if it be now asked what this faith is, I must answer, that it is better declared by its effects and properties, than it can be set forth by any immediate description of the thing itself. However, this seems to be no improper representation of its nature, that it is a durable, fixed disposition of holiness, immediately infused by God into the soul, whereby the soul in all its faculties is changed, renewed, and sanctified, and withal powerfully inclined to exert itself in all the actions of a pious life.

It is not a bare persuasion or conviction resting upon the heart; for persuasion (which is nothing else but the proposal of suitable objects to the mind) is of itself no more able to effect this strange and mighty work, than it is possible to persuade a man that is stark dead to be alive again. No; it is a living, active principle, wonderfully produced and created in the heart by the almighty working of God's Spirit; and which does as really move and act a man in the course of his spiritual life, as his very soul does in the course of his natural. And this is that faith by which we stand; and if ever we are supported against the terrible assaults of our spiritual adversary, this must be our supporter.

In the words we have these two things considerable:

I. Something supposed; which is, that believers will be encountered and assaulted in their spiritual course.

II. Something expressed; which is, that it is faith alone that in such encounters does or can make them victorious.

I. And for the first of these, *the thing supposed.* The words of the text are a manifest allusion to a person assaulted or combated by an enemy. From which the Spirit of God in scripture frequently borrows metaphors, by which to express to us the condition of a Christian in this world: sometimes setting it out by wrestling, as in Eph. vi. 12, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers." Sometimes by warring, as in 2 Cor. x. 4, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." And sometimes by striving, as in Heb. xii. 4, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." But still it describes a believer's life in some word or other, importing contest or opposition.

Now in every such contest or combat, there are three things to be considered: 1. The persons engaged in it. 2. The thing contended for by it. 3. And lastly, the means and ways by which it is managed and carried on.

Of each of which in their order; and,

1. For the persons engaged in this conflict: they are such, whose hatred of one another is almost as old as the world itself, as being founded in that primitive enmity sown by God himself

between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, in Gen. iii. 15. The devil's hatred of us bears date with our very being, and his opposition is as early as his hatred; for it is of too active a virulence to lie still and dormant, without putting forth itself in all the actings of a mischievous hostility. The devil hates us enough as men, but much more as believers; he maligns us for the privileges of our creation, but much more for the mercies of our redemption: and as soon as ever we list ourselves in the service of the great Captain of our salvation, he bids present defiance to us, and proclaims perpetual war against us; which he will never be wanting to carry on with all the force, art, and industry, that malice, bounded within the limits of created power, can reach unto.

None, that gives up his name to Christianity, must think that he enters upon a state of ease, softness, and fruition. For though it is called indeed "the way of peace," yet it is of peace only in another world, or of peace with God and our own consciences; but of incessant war with the devil, who will always have power enough to trouble and discompose even those whom he cannot destroy; and to bruise our heel, though he gets a broken head for his pains.

We see, then, who the persons are, concerned in this spiritual combat: namely, believers, on the one side; that is, persons truly sanctified and justified, and consequently in a state of grace and favour with God; and, on the other side, the great enemy of mankind, the tempter with all his hellish retinue, all the powers of darkness, as it were, drawn out into battalia, and headed by him, to defy the armies of the living God.

2. It follows now, that we see what is the thing designed and contended for by him, in the assault he makes upon believers, which is the second thing here to be considered. And it is, in short, to cast them down from that state of happiness in which he finds them; which happiness consisting partly in God's image, which is holiness, and partly in an interest in God's favour, which indeed is but a consequence of the former, the loss of one naturally drawing after it the loss of the other; therefore the devil does the utmost he is able, wholly to divest the soul of both.

(1.) And first, he designs to cast believers down from that purity and sanctity of life, that the Spirit of regeneration has wrought them up to: for the devil having lost all holiness himself, perfectly abhors it in all others. A pious person is an eyesore to him; and to be holy, is to begin his hell here upon earth, and to torment him before his time.

As he was the first and grand apostate from God, so he is restless and indefatigable to propagate that apostasy and rebellion amongst mankind, and to draw them into a confederacy against their Maker. He is said to have been "a liar" and "a murderer

from the beginning;" and chiefly does he attempt the murder of souls, by making them like himself. And so intent is he upon his cursed game, that he will compass sea and land, tempt and entice night and day, use both force and art to debauch and deface God's image in the soul, to rob it of its innocence; and, in a word, to plunge it into all kind of filth, folly, and impurity. It is his business, for the labour he employs about it; and his recreation, for the pleasure he takes in it: for every upright and virtuous person is a reproach to him, and upbraids him with the loss of that which he was so much concerned to have preserved entire. Holiness carries its beauty with it; and there are none that malign and envy the beautiful so much as those that are deformed: but sin has left upon the devil a spiritual deformity, greater and more offensive than any bodily deformity whatsoever.

(2.) The devil designs to cast believers down from their interest in the divine favour. After the angels were fallen from heaven, the door was presently, without either delay or pity, shut upon them: nor was there any reserve of mercy, to recover them to their lost estate. Whereupon their envy and malice were inflamed against the sons of men, whom God treated upon gentler terms, not taking them upon the first advantage; but allowing them means of pardon and restitution, and so cancelling the "handwriting that stood against them," by reason of the law. He spread open the arms of an evangelical and better covenant to receive them.

No wonder, therefore, if the devil strives to cast the soul from that pitch of happiness, which he finds denied to himself; and if he grudges to see men so much superior to him in the felicity of their estate, whom he knows to be so much inferior to himself in the perfection of their nature; no wonder, I say, if the pride of Lucifer disdains to see poor men ascend to that from which he fell, and so would lay them in the dust again, from whence they were first taken. The devil would make us God's enemies by sinning, that so God may be our enemy in punishing. For the thing that he so earnestly drives at, is to sow an immortal enmity between God and an immortal soul, and to embroil the whole creation in a war against heaven.

The divine grace, he knows, is a thing never to be aspired to by him; the everlasting gates are made fast against him; and therefore he would give himself that fantastic pleasure, at least, of having company in the same condemnation, and consequently of getting the whole race of mankind excluded and cut off from the enjoyment of that, of which he himself has no hope. He would gratify his envy and his implacable virulence, by feeding upon the sight of others' misery, and solacing himself with the despair and wretchedness of unpardoned sinners. He would have others hate God as much as he does, to the intent that they may be as much hated by him.

For, believe it, how little soever men may value the grace,

mercies, and forbearances of the gospel; yet the devil, who knows the worth of them by wanting them, would never be so much concerned to bereave us of the benefit of them, did he not judge it infinite and invaluable. For can we think that he would be so intent and busy, use so many arts and stratagems, only to rob us of a toy? No, surely; we may learn the greatness of the prize, from the labour used to compass and obtain it. The favour of God is the very life of the creature; and if the devil can but prevail with a man to sin himself out of it, he prevails with him to cut his own throat, and to imbrue his hands in the blood of his own soul.

3. I come now to the third thing considerable in this spiritual combat, which are the ways and means by which it is managed and carried on. I shall mention four.

(1.) The devil's own immediate suggestions. The devil, being a spirit, can operate upon the mind and the imagination, raising in it evil thoughts, and frequently filthy desires, by the representation of objects suitable to our beloved and most predominant affections. And this course of working is so subtle, and withal so efficacious, that he can slide into the hearts of men without any resistance, or indeed any observation. Thus he is said to have filled the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. 3, and to "have entered into Judas," John xiii. 27. All which was done by the wicked thoughts he injected into the minds of those wretched persons. The devil is often at work within us, when we know it not: and secretly undermining the very foundation of our peace with God, planting his engines, and laying his trains, to fetch down all that spiritual building that the Holy Ghost has reared up within us. He creeps into our bosoms, and lodges himself in our very hearts, before we can so much as spy out his motions; and then he is tampering with our thoughts, desires, and particular inclinations, before we are aware that our adversary is near us, or any thing designed against us: upon which account, he is such an enemy as will certainly gain an entrance; and therefore it must be our care, that he completes it not with a conquest.

(2.) The second means, by which the devil assaults a man, is by the infidelity of his own heart. A quality that, of all others, does his work the most compendiously and the most effectually. It was the engine by which he battered down that goodly fabric of the divine image in our first parents: and wheresoever he can fix this instrument, like another Archimedes, he will turn about the world, and make every one of his assaults against the souls of men successful and victorious.

This is such a thing as was even able to counterwork the miracles of Christ, and, as it were, to bind those hands of omnipotence by which he wrought his mighty wonders. For in Matt. xiii. 58, it is said of our Saviour's countrymen, that "he could do no mighty work amongst them, because of their unbe-

lief." It is a thing that seems to keep possession for Satan in the hearts of men, and to frustrate all addresses of the Holy Ghost to them: for if men can but once arrive to that pitch of desperate impiety, as to question the truth of the divine oracles, and to disbelieve the words of veracity itself, what can possibly work upon them, while they are under the power of such a persuasion? there being no coming at the will and the affections, but through the understanding; nor any prevailing upon those, without first convincing of this. And surely, if the understanding can hold out against the commanding authority of divine and infallible truths, it may well defy the impression of all other arguments whatsoever.

The devil was to induce Eve to eat the apple, against God's express prohibition, guarded and confirmed by a severe threatening. A hard task, one would think, to undertake to bring a person, both innocent and very knowing, to such a horrid prevarication; and to eat the forbidden fruit, though served up to her with certain death; Gen. ii. 17, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And questionless, the tempter could never have succeeded in such an unlikely attempt, had not unbelief cut the way before him: for as soon as he brought her to disbelieve that severe word of God, and to be persuaded that she "should not surely die," and thereby, in effect, to give the lie to an infinite truth, the devil's work was then done; for thereupon she presently takes the fatal morsel, and eats death and confusion, both to herself and her whole posterity.

(3.) The third means by which the devil assaults and combats the soul, is by the alluring vanities of the world. Look over the whole universe, and you will find it to be the devil's grand and plentiful magazine, there being scarce any thing in it, but what he sometimes uses either as a weapon or a snare: the whole way and course of it being a professed enmity and opposition to God; so that he that loves one cannot possibly love the other, James iv. 4.

While we live in the world, we walk upon traps and pitfalls, and such things as have a strange and peculiar energy to work our destruction. Even the most beautiful and desirable things of it are deadly and pernicious; nay, so much the more deadly, by how much the more desirable. Like a sepulchre, it is still a devouring and a consuming thing, for all its paint and varnish, its stately and fair appearance. For see how the world first entangles, and then kills such as come within the compass of its mortal embraces!

One man is taken with the riches of it, which he pursues, follows, and at last worships, till he has even made his gain his god: but at length he finds that his god deserts him, and leaves him in the hand of the devil. Another has his eyes dazzled with the glories and glistering honours of the world; and being

mad upon them, lists himself a servant of the devil, in the practice of all baseness imaginable, that so he may at length rise by him and like him; not considering that the devil carries the aspiring wretch up to such a pinnacle, only that he may persuade him to throw himself thence down headlong. Another man is catched and inveigled with the pleasures of the world, and so suffers himself to be carried away with that general torrent of voluptuousness, that runs violently, and drowns certainly. He first makes himself a swine, and then the devil enters into him, and hurries him into the gulf of eternal perdition.

And if the world cannot get that hold of a man, as to captivate him into a slavish pursuit either of the riches, honours, or pleasures of it; yet the very custom, the compliance, and fashion of it insensibly cools, and at length freezes up, that ardent principle of love to God and holiness, that should animate and bear up the soul in the ways of duty. Nay, the very wisdom of the world (which is the best part of that bad thing) pollutes and deflours the heart, and brings it under the power of principles directly contrary to the very spirit and design of religion: and a man shall pass for a wise man and a politician, when, with much artifice and subtlety, he is only spinning the thread of his own destruction. Which being so, it is not for nothing that Christ bids his disciples be of good cheer, for this very one thing, that "he had overcome the world," John xvi. 33, that great and mighty adversary, and, as it were, under the devil himself, the general of all his forces. For it is the custom, the garb, and fashion of the world, that credits, and strengthens, and in a manner leads on all those sins, by which the devil fights against the souls of men.

(4.) Fourthly and lastly, the devil assaults and encounters men by the help of their own lusts and corruptions. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are those three formidable enemies that we stand jointly engaged against by our very baptism. Our own bodies are armed against our souls; for the scriptures tell us, that "the lusts of the flesh war against the soul," or spirit. So that it may be said that a man's enemies are not only those of his own house, but also of his own flesh; not only of the house he lives in, but also of the house he carries about him: and surely a bosom-enemy must needs be as great a mischief as a bosom-friend is a blessing. The body of sin and lust that dwells within us, is an adversary that will be always annoying us, a domestic tempter, always at our elbow to seduce, and thereby to ruin us.

So that which way soever we cast our thoughts, we shall find enemies ready to attack us in all our spiritual concerns. For if we consider the invisible world, there is the devil and his legions embattled against us; if we look abroad upon things visible, there the whole world stands engaged in the

same quarrel: and if we look yet further into the lesser world, ourselves, there we shall find our bodies furnishing out weapons of unrighteousness for the same war: and lastly, if we take a survey of our own hearts, we shall find them full of treachery and infidelity; so that we have cause to cry out, Who shall deliver us from such potent enemies, and especially from our own selves! How shall we be able to bear up against such an unequal, such an overpowering force? Surely it can be no ordinary assistance that can bring us off from such opposition clear and victorious. And if the strong man be overcome, it must needs be by some other, that is stronger than himself.

And thus I have finished the first general head proposed from the words; namely, the thing implied or supposed in them, which was, that believers should be encountered and assaulted in their spiritual course.

But now, as all kind of opposition or assault includes in the very nature of it an endeavour in the assailant to conquer and cast down the person assailed by him from his present station, which we have been hitherto discoursing of; so, in the second place, it implies also an endeavour in the person assaulted to maintain and make good that his station against all the force and opposition of his adversary. And he that is so victorious as to keep his ground, maugre all such encounters, is said to "stand in the day of battle;" which is a word expressing the posture of a combatant defending himself with success: Eph. vi. 13, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." So that by standing, is here signified to us a man's preserving himself in that estate, from which his adversary contends by all means possible to throw him down.

It remains therefore now, that we show how and by what means this is to be effected; and the text tells us, that it must be by faith; "by faith ye stand:" which introduces

II. The second general head proposed, which is *the thing positively expressed in the words;* namely, that in all these spiritual assaults made against believers by their implacable enemy, it is faith alone that does or can render them victorious. For the making out of which, I shall show,

1. In what condition man is, considered according to his mere natural estate, and void of the grace of faith.

2. What advantages and helps faith gives believers, for the conquering of all that opposition that shall be made against them by their spiritual enemy.

1. And for the first of these, the condition that man is in, considered according to his natural estate, and void of the grace of faith: which we may be sure is bad and deplorable enough: and to prove it so, there needs no other argument than this, that if

bare nature, since the fall of Adam, were not infinitely insufficient to work out its own recovery, the divine grace would never have put itself to the expense of little less than a miracle, to work in it such qualifications as may in some measure enable it to acquit itself in the keeping of God's commands. For so very strong is the sway and bias of nature to contrary courses, that if those inclinations were not controlled and overpowered by some superior principle, it would, notwithstanding all instructions and exhortations to the ways of duty, of itself roll back and relapse into a state of sin, even without any solicitation from Satan or the world: as a stone, if we quit our hold of it, will of itself, without any further impulse, fall down to its centre fast enough. Nothing can hinder the workings of nature, but something that shall be of more force than nature. But while a man is destitute of faith, what forces can he rally up against the workings of so quick and vigorous a principle as his own corruption? Will he oppose his imperfect good desires, his fading resolutions, his good duties, and self-righteousness? Alas! nature will quickly break through all such puny resistances. These are like the cords upon Samson, they seem to bind him indeed, while he lies still; but when the strong man bestirs himself, then presently they break: all the forces that reason or natural conscience can raise, fly before a temptation. All good purposes, made in the strength of human wisdom and bare morality, vanish, when a pleasing sin offers and presents itself to a lively appetite.

It is with the body of sin as with our natural body, which, if there be strength of nature, will by degrees work out all those obstructions that grieve or offend it. So strength of natural corruption will of itself gradually work off all those convictions that restrain it.

Nay, after it has been in some measure hampered and oppressed by those convincing works, it will then, upon the least recovery of itself, act so much the more strongly against them; it being the property of any active principle, whensoever it is opposed, then to exert its strongest actions in order to its own preservation and defence. Every conviction or serious thought cast into the soul by the word, will oppose the corrupt workings of nature; which finding itself so opposed, will endeavour to rescue and relieve itself by a greater vehemence of acting.

So that, till a thorough change pass upon our sinful nature, in the renovation of all its powers, faculties, and inclinations, the soul remains as weak and naked as it first came into the world, without either strength or weapons to defend itself; and when an alluring temptation comes in its way, it will run with fury through all its convictions to embrace it, and is no more able to abstain from it, than a hungry wolf to forbear his prey. Nature has corruption enough to be its own tempter; and if want of

grace leaves the door of the heart unguarded or open, sin needs no other invitation to enter: nor has the soul only, while unrenewed by faith, a readiness and propensity to sin, but also a cursed suitableness to and compliance with every thing that may any ways induce it to sin: so that in this forlorn, faithless condition, it is like a city, about which there is an army besieging it, and within which there is treachery betraying it, and no arms to defend it. And thus much for the first way of proving that it is faith alone that can render a man victorious in his conflicts with his spiritual adversaries: namely, by showing his deplorable weakness and insufficiency to deal with such opponents, while considered in his natural estate, and void of faith.

2. The other way of proving the same assertion is, by showing what advantages and helps faith gives believers for the conquest of these their spiritual enemies. I shall mention three.

(1.) It gives them a real union with Christ; concerning which we must know, that as the union of the soul to the body is the cause of life natural, so the union of Christ to the soul is the fountain of life spiritual. Christ being to the soul like armour, he then only defends it when he is close united to it. And that such a nearness to him will afford us such protection from him, is evident from the nature of those things by which this union between him and believers is expressed. In John xv. 1, 2, Christ compares himself to the vine, and believers to the branches. And in Col. i. 18, he is compared to the head, and believers to the members. Where we see, that as long as the branch continues united to the vine, it receives both life and sap from it, whereby it is enabled to fructify and flourish; and so long as the members preserve their conjunction with the head, they derive from thence spirit and motion, whereby they are enabled to preserve themselves. But let there be a separation or disjunction between either of these, and then presently the branch withers and dies, and the members putrefy and rot, and at length pass into a total corruption. And just so it is with Christ and believers: "through him strengthening them, they can do all things," Phil. iv. 13; and on the other side, "without him they can do nothing," John xv. 4. It is from his fulness, that life and strength flows in upon every part and portion of his mystical body. And as our union to him is the great conduit by which all this is conveyed to us, so faith is the cause of this union. Faith ties the conjugal knot, and is that uniting principle, that like a great nerve or string fastens us to our spiritual head, and so makes us partake of all its enlivening and supporting influences.

Aristotle observes, that union is never perfect between complete natures of a different kind. But now it is faith alone that denominates and makes us new creatures; and consequently gives us a spiritual cognation with Christ, without which it is no more possible for us to be united to him, than for the dead to incorpo-

rate with the living, for darkness to hold communion with light, or hell with heaven.

In short, the result of all this is: want of a true and lively faith in Christ speaks want of union to him; and want of union to him speaks want of influence from him: without which no sin can be really opposed, much less overcome. It is from Christ, and from Christ alone, that there must issue forth strength for the subduing of our corruptions: from him alone, that there must come a healing virtue for the stanching of this bloody issue of sin, or in spite of all our plasterings and dressings of it, it will prove incurable: it is from him that there must come a continual supply of assisting grace to support and bear us up in a course of evangelical obedience; and without this, miserable experience will convince us that we are not able to stand.

(2.) Faith helps believers in the conquest of their spiritual enemies, by engaging the assistance of the Spirit on their behalf; without whose special influence it is impossible for the soul to do any thing in the ways of duty effectually, or to oppose any sin with success, for still we find all ascribed to this. It is through the Spirit that the deeds of the flesh are to be mortified, Rom. viii. 13, and it is the Spirit that worketh in us, Phil. ii. 13. Nothing but the Spirit of God, living, reigning, and conquering in the heart, can repulse and beat back our great adversary. That opposition that is from without, must be resisted and kept out by some living mighty principle residing within us: but if the heart of man had of itself any thing to secure it against the assaults of sin and the tempter, Christ would have saved himself the labour both of purchasing and of sending the Spirit. But he well knew our weakness, our exceeding great and deplorable weakness; how unable naturally we are, but to see the false and alluring fruit of sin, and not to desire it; to desire it, and not to taste it. How ready we always are to admit of a temptation, though offered by the devil; to eat the apple, though presented by a serpent. And there are some temptations so strong, contrived with so much hellish art, tendered with such particular advantage to the acceptance of a corrupt heart, and withal pressed with such importunity, that nothing but the hand of omnipotence can keep them off; nothing but the Spirit of God himself can hinder them from fastening upon, and prevailing over, the soul.

From whence it is evident, that the heart must be borne up and acted by the Spirit of God, or of necessity fall away. Every man naturally moves that way that the temptation moves; and if he goes a contrary way, he must needs do it, not as he is led by himself, but by another. As in the motion of the celestial orbs, when we see the inferior ones snatched about with a motion contrary to their own proper motion, we collect thence, that they are moved by a superior.

This is most certain, that it is not in the power of man that

goes, to order his goings, but he must have a conduct. It is not in the power of man to foil the tempter; but it is God himself that must bruise Satan under our feet: it is not in the tender herb to keep itself from withering, and being blasted; but in the careful hand that covers and protects it. When God bid the children of Israel go and possess Cannan, he told them that he would send his angel before them, and drive out their enemies. In like manner we go forth against a temptation; but Christ must send his Spirit before us to subdue it, or we shall certainly fall and perish by it. And as it is the Spirit that must do all this for us, so it is faith alone that entitles us to his assistance, as an effect and consequent of that interest that it first gives us in Christ. The Spirit never assists but where he dwells; and still it is faith that makes the soul, as well as the body, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

(3.) And lastly, faith helps believers in the conquest of their spiritual enemies, by giving them both a title to, and a power effectually to apply God's promises. We all (as has been shown) stand engaged in a spiritual warfare, and strength we have none, but what we fetch from God. God conveys none but through Christ; whatsoever Christ gives is by the Spirit, and the Spirit works by the promises, putting those weapons into our hands; and faith is properly that spiritual hand into which they are put. Every promise is indeed a spring of living water; but it is water in a well, and faith is the bucket that must fetch it up both for our use and comfort. There is enough in every promise, if apprehended by a lively faith, to enable any intelligent nature to defy and look all the powers of hell in the face. That one promise, Rev. ii. 10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," is enough to render the strongest assault of the devil vain and ineffectual, and the most alluring temptation flat and insipid; if so be faith takes in the truth of it by a firm persuasion.

For God having so framed the nature of man, that every one of his actions is the prosecution of something first desired; and since nothing moves desire, but so far as it is apprehended good and beneficial; it follows, that since the devil has engaged our actions and desires in his service by the pleasures and profits of the world, and such other things as affect the sense; if ever those desires be taken off from thence, and pitched upon the service of God, it must be by proposing to them some greater good, obtainable in such a course, than can be had in the other: and greater good there seems to be none, but heaven and immortality. Which things falling not under the apprehension of sense, but only being represented in the divine promise, they are only apprehensible by believing, and by that faith that apprehends the promise: for till I either know or believe that there is a heaven, and a state of immortal glory, these can have no more influence upon my prac-

tice than if there were no such things at all. So that it is faith that does, as it were, realize and make these things as present to a rational understanding, as the eye makes a desirable object present to the sense. Whereupon, in Heb. xi. 1, faith is both with great elegance and significance styled, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." That is, when we really believe the certain event of any good, though it be indeed future, yet it has as strong an influence to move the soul, as if it were actually present; and though it be indeed invisible, yet it does as really affect a man's desires, as if it were placed before his eyes. So that those heroical conquests obtained by the saints over the devil and the world, and there so fully described by the apostle, are all attributed to the strength of their faith in the promises; as, that "they had seen the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them," in the 13th verse. And particularly that glorious triumph that Moses made over the proffer of all the grandeur of a court and kingdom, is solely ascribed to the mighty efficacy of the same faith, as the only thing that could enable him "to have respect to the recompence of reward," in the 26th verse, and even to "see him who was invisible," in verse 27.

Thus, therefore, does faith empower believers to stand it out against all the fiery onsets of their spiritual enemies; namely, by enabling them to see better and more desirable things in God's promises, to engage them to obey his precepts, than any that the devil can propose to them in his temptations, to allure them to the commission of sin.

Wherefore it being evident, from what has been delivered, both that believers will be fiercely encountered in their spiritual course, and that faith is the only thing that can preserve and defend them in those encounters; we collect hence both the necessity and excellency of this grace: for it is this alone that will bear us victorious through all that opposition, that would otherwise wholly crush and extinguish us. It is this that will set us above all our enemies, by setting us above our own weaknesses. It is this that will make us "more than conquerors;" and that by carrying us out of ourselves, and pitching us upon Christ. For, in all these spiritual conflicts, it will be found that he that stands upon no other legs but his own will certainly fall; there being no sure station for poor sinners, but in him who is the rock of ages, and the great Saviour of mankind; and so able to save to the uttermost all those that by faith rely upon him.

To whom, therefore, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE MERCY OF GOD.

PSALM CXLV. 9.

The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

HE that undertakes to discourse of any of God's attributes, must profess that he undertakes to discourse of that which he does not thoroughly understand, if so be that he understands himself. For how can a finite comprehend an infinite? or how can any one express what he cannot comprehend? But of all God's perfections, his mercy especially is a theme so great, that none but an infinite person can worthily enlarge upon it. However, since God is pleased to call us to the study and contemplation of himself, we may, I conceive, without any presumption or injury to his greatness, frame to ourselves the best apprehensions and discourses, that the condition of our nature can afford us of a thing, of which we have no explicit knowledge.

Now mercy, as it is ascribed to God, may be considered and taken two ways.

I. For the principle itself; which is nothing else, but the simple undivided nature of God, as it does manifest and cast abroad itself in such and such acts of grace and favour to the creature. Which very same essence or nature, according to different respects, is called wisdom, justice, power, mercy, and the like.

II. It is taken for the effects and actions flowing from that principle, by which it does so manifest and exert itself.

Which also admit of a distinction into two sorts.

1. Such as are general, and of equal diffusion to all.

2. Such as are special, and peculiarly relate to the redemption and reparation of fallen man, whom God was pleased to choose and single out from the rest of his works, as the proper object for this great attribute to do its utmost upon.

Now it was the former sense that was intended by the psalmist in the text, as is evident from the universality of the words. It was such a mercy as spread itself over all his works; such a one as reached as wide as creation and providence. It was like the sun and the light, to shine upon all without exception. And therefore we are not at all concerned here to treat of the miracles of God's pardoning mercy, as they display them-

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selves in the satisfaction and ransom paid down by Christ for sinners: for it would be a great deviation from the design of the words, to confine the overflowing goodness of a Creator to the more limited dispensations of a Redeemer: and so to drown a universal in a particular.

For the prosecution of the words, there is no way that seems more easy and natural, and withal more full, for the setting forth of God's general mercy to the creature, than to take a distinct, though short, survey of the several parts of the creation, and therein to show how it exerts and lays itself out upon each of them.

I. And first, to begin at the lowest step of creature-perfection. The divine goodness pours itself forth even upon the inanimate part of the creation: for look over the whole universe, and you shall find no one part of it, but has its peculiar beauty and ornament. So that the Greek word κόσμος, which signifies the *world*, signifies also *dress* and *ornament;* as if the world were nothing else but a great union and collection of all beauties and perfections. "The sun," the psalmist tells us, "comes every day dressed and adorned, like a bridegroom, out of his chambers in the east." He casts abroad a lustre too glorious to behold: it is enough that we can see it at a second hand, and by reflection. Nor can the night itself conceal the glories of heaven; but the moon and the stars, those deputed lights, then show forth their lesser beauties: yet even those so great, that when weariness, and the lateness of the night, has invited some eyes to sleep, in the meantime the lights of it have kept others awake, to view their exact motion and admirable order. While the labourer lies down for his rest, the astronomer sits up, and watches for his pleasure. And then, if we consider the earth and the sea, we shall find them like two inexhaustible storehouses, exhibiting the riches of nature in a boundless unmeasurable plenty; a plenty ennobled by two excellencies, fulness and regularity. So that the whole system of the world is but a standing copy and representation of the divine goodness, writing little images of itself upon every the least part and portion of this great body.

2. But secondly, to proceed further to plants and vegetables, which have a little higher advance of perfection, and enjoy something like life; that is, something that is enough to make them grow and flourish: "Consider the lilies," says our Saviour, Matt. vi. 28, "how they grow; they toil not, they spin not, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them." And we read in the 30th verse, of "God's clothing the grass." It is some part of a father's or a master's bounty, when his sons or servants go splendidly clothed, and so carry the marks of his liberality upon their back. And then also, to preserve these things in a constant possession of that beauty that their first

creation imparted to them, all the influences of the upper, and the virtues of the lower world are set on work; all the elements are employed, the planets engaged, and the sun himself rises betimes, and labours all day long, to give verdure and freshness to the least spire of grass, to convey sap and nutriment to every little plant or twig: so bountiful is the hand of Providence, to maintain the being that it once gave. So that it is here expressed not only by mercy, but by "tender mercy;" such a one as is proper to parents, who preserve their children with care and solicitude, supplying their necessities, and providing also for their conveniences. There is not the least flower but seems to hold up its head, and look pleasantly, in the secret sense of the goodness of its heavenly Maker; which silent rhetoric, though we cannot hear, but only see, yet it is so full and expressive, that David thought he neither spoke impropriety, or nonsense, or a strong line, where he says, "that even the valleys break forth into singing." And surely then it must be a song of praise and thanksgiving, a song of joy and triumph, for those liberal effusions of goodness, even upon these lower parts of the creation.

But this goodness stops not here: but when those things seem to have finished their course, and then to wither and die, and at last bury themselves in the bowels of the same earth that bore them; why then, the same Providence vouchsafes them a resurrection, and a return of life. Every season has, as it were, its commission and command from heaven, to furnish the world anew with the very same things; and when the spring comes, the decrepit tree grows young and blossoms, the grass rises from the dead, and the flowers step forth, as if the whole winter's interval had been but a sleep, and the places upon which they grew were indeed beds, without a metaphor. Thus the goodness of Heaven, while it provides for the creature, proceeds in a constant circle; and as a circle has no end, so neither has that. For it first produces these things into being, then preserves them, and at last, being dead, recovers them; and by that gives them some resemblance of an immortality, so far as the proportions of their nature will admit.

And if it be now said, What good can all this be to such creatures as have no sense of it? I answer, that every thing that is perfect and regular is a credit and a glory to itself, as well as to its author, whether it knows so much or no. Different natures have different capacities of good: things endued with sense and apprehension receive what is good by apprehending and being sensible of it. But to say, that therefore inanimate things, whose nature is wholly different, must do so too, or be utterly uncapable of good, that is a great fallacy and error in discourse; it being to rate the most different things by the same measure.

For as the brutes are, in their way, capable of receiving the benefit and good that is properly fitted to their nature and con-

dition, though they cannot take it in by the sublimer and higher apprehensions of reason: so these inanimate beings, that are void of sense, have also their proper good things belonging to them, though they cannot enjoy them by hearing, seeing, tasting, and the like, which are the peculiar fruitions of sensible creatures. The herb feeds upon the juice of a good soil, and drinks in the dew of heaven as eagerly, and thrives by it as effectually, as the stalled ox, that tastes every thing that he eats or drinks. Providence has suited each nature with its enjoyment; and therefore the "tender mercies of God" may be said to be over these things also.

3. From hence, let us now, in the third place, advance a little higher, to the sensible parts of the creation, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air; amongst which, we shall find even the chiefest and the strongest of them constant retainers and pensioners to the bounty of their Creator: the lion, who, one would think, was pretty well able to provide for himself; yet David tells us, Psalm civ. 21, "that he still seeks his meat from God;" and the "young ravens too can call upon him" in their way, and be heard and fed by him when they do call, through a strange providence.

How has God given every creature a power most particularly to pursue and compass that which makes for the welfare of its being! Where he denies strength, he usually gives sagacity and quickness of sense; and withal implants in every one a certain instinct, that teaches and prompts it to make use of that faculty in which its chief ability is seated. The ox, a creature of none of the most ready senses, has them yet ready enough to know how to defend himself, and will not encounter his adversary or assailant, as the mastiff does, with his teeth. The little bird has not strength to grapple with the hawk or the eagle; but it has agility of body to carry it out of reach, and smallness too to convey it out of sight. Nay, and if we consider the poor helpless lamb, which has neither strength, nor wings, nor craft to secure itself by, but seems wholly offered by nature as a prey to any thing that will prey upon it; yet its great usefulness for the occasions of man's life has entitled it to the care and protection of him whom it serves. So that the goodness of God has left nothing defenceless, but has sent every thing into the world, well accoutred and provided, according to the exigence of those necessities that its nature is like to expose it to. And he that would do Providence right, in recounting fully what it has done for the creature in this particular, must, with Pliny, write a Natural History.

4. In the fourth place, proceed we now one step further, and take a survey of rational creatures, men and angels. And first for man; who is, as it were, an epitome, or rather a union of the two worlds; as by his body relating to the earth, and by his soul

to heaven: nothing can more declare the goodness of his Creator to him, than that he made him "after his own image."

But passing over the bounty of God to man in his state of innocence, as not sufficiently to be expressed by any since the loss of it; I shall remark only those blessings and favours, which men, even since the fall and apostasy of Adam, seem to enjoy upon the mere stock of the common mercies of Providence; which, we find, as to all the outward materials of happiness, makes no discrimination between the good and the bad; but causes the sun and the rain to visit the vineyard, as well when it is Ahab's, as while it was Naboth's. And David says of the wicked, in several of his psalms, "that God fills their bellies with his hid treasures; that their eyes stand out with fatness, and that they have even more than heart can wish."

And surely to be rich, healthy, and honourable, are favours and blessings, and such as are the prizes that the most excellent and renowned part of the world strive for: yet experience will show, that these are not the badges of saintship, or the certain marks of God's peculiar mercies. A man may affront and offend all that is above him, and yet command and enjoy all that is beneath him. For were not the four monarchies of the world successively in the hands of heathens, who worshipped false gods while they subsisted and flourished by the beneficence of the true? Nay, and to go even to Israel itself, were not almost all of its kings enemies to and contemners of that God whose peculiar people they reigned over? Which shows that they enjoyed these privileges and prerogatives, not upon the score of any federal endearment, or any interest in a promise that they could lay claim to. These and many other examples declare, that the benignity of Providence seems to be promiscuous and universal, and as undistinguishing as the air and the elements, which equally dispense themselves to the necessities of all.

And now, we cannot but judge it an instance of a strange and almost an invincible goodness, for a prince to clothe his rebels in scarlet, and to make his traitors fare deliciously every day. Yet the wicked and the profane ones of the world, who stand in the same defiance of the majesty and supremacy of heaven, are treated with as great obligingness and favour by him whom they so defy.

And besides, how many are the casual unforeseen dangers, that the hand of Providence rescues them from! How many little things carry in them the causes of death! and how often are men that have escaped, amazed that they were not destroyed! Which shows that there is an eye that still watches over them, that always sees, though it is not seen; that knows their strengths and their weaknesses; where they are safe, and where they may be struck; and in how many respects they lie open to the invasion of a sad accident. And though it be ten to one, but that in the

space of a year or two, a man is attacked by one or other of those many thousand casualties that he is obnoxious to; yet we see that most men make a shift to rub out, and to be safe, to grow old, and to be well. In a word, every man lives by a perpetual deliverance; a deliverance, which for the unlikelihood of it he could not expect, and for his own unworthiness, I am sure, he could not deserve.

5. And now, in the last place, we are arrived at the very top of the creation, the angels; those more lively and bright resemblances of the Deity, whose raised endowments and excellencies speak the goodness of their Creator to them in that degree, that it would nonplus the tongue of angels themselves to express the greatness of the obligation. For compare a Solomon, an Aristotle, or an Archimedes to a child that newly begins to speak, and they do not more transcend such a one, than the angelical understanding exceeds theirs even in its most sublime improvements and acquisitions.

Nothing but omniscience can outdo the knowledge of angels; a knowledge that dives into all the recesses of nature, and spies out all the secret workings of second causes by a certain and immediate view; which the quickest human intellect pursues by tedious meditation, dubious conjectures, short experiments, and perhaps after all is forced to sit down in ignorance and dissatisfaction.

Nor do they excel in knowledge only, but also in power and activity. Men indeed raise armies, and, by much ado and much time, rout an enemy or sack a city; but we shall find a destroying angel in one night slaying a hundred, fourscore, and five thousand men, 2 Kings xix. 35. So great is the force of those spiritual beings! For corporeal matter is not the proper cause of action, but remains sluggish and unmoved, till it receives motion by the impulse of an immaterial principle: nor does any philosophy prove, nor indeed can prove, that any thing that is merely body can move itself. So that the angelical essence being free from any material mixture, is also free from all clogs and encumbrances. It is all pure action; and so must needs exert itself at a higher rate of force, than any of those bodily agents that we see and converse with.

Neither do the angels move by certain periods and steps of progression, as we are fain to do, who carry our own weights and hinderances about us; but they measure the vastest spaces and the greatest distances in the twinkling of an eye, in a moment, in a portion of time so short, that it falls under no mortal perception or observation. And for this cause were the cherubims in the tabernacle painted with wings, the best way that we have to express the greatest agility by: though the swiftness of an arrow out of a bow is no more to be compared to the speed of an angel, than the motion of a snail can be compared to that.

And now, as God has been so bountiful to the angels, by ennobling them with such excellent qualities, so he has yet further manifested the same bounty to them in a double respect: (1.) In respect of the place of their habitation or abode. (2.) In respect of their employment.

(1.) And first, for the place of their abode: it is the highest heaven, the place of God's immediate residence; even the presence-chamber of the Almighty. Matt. xviii. 10, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father," says our Saviour: and Psalm lxviii. 17, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; and the Lord is among them." They are, as I may so say, God's menial and domestic servants; they are part of his family; they attend about his throne; and have the most exalted and direct fruitions of the beatific vision.

(2.) In the next place, as for their employment, that is twofold.

1st. To be continually worshipping and speaking praises to God; to behold and admire him in the full brightness of his glory; to contemplate upon all his ineffable perfections, and to be in a continual rapture and ecstasy upon such contemplation; expressing it in constant hallelujahs and adorations. In a word, their great business is to admire and to praise.

2dly. Their other employment is immediately to execute God's commands about the government of the world: they are the great ministers of providence, and it is their glory so to be: their service is their privilege; as in the courts of princes every attendant is honourable, or at least thinks himself so. The angels are still despatched by God upon all his great messages to the world; and therefore their very name in Greek, which is ἄγγελος, signifies a messenger. In short, they have the most illustrious employment that can be, which is to be ambassadors extraordinary from the King of kings.

And thus I have traced the divine goodness to the creature, beginning at the lowest, and from thence ascending to the highest parts of the creation: which subject, though it has been general, yet as to the use and improvement of it may very well have a particular reference and application to us men. And therefore the deduction that I shall make from all the precedent discourse, shall be to instate and settle in our minds right thoughts of the natural goodness and benignity of God towards men.

How many and vast endearments might we draw from God barely as a Creator! Suppose there had never been any news of a Redeemer to fallen Adam; no hope, no after-game for him as a sinner; yet let us peruse the obligations that lay upon him as a man.

Was it not enough for him, who but yesterday was nothing, to

be advanced into an existence, that is, into one perfection of the Deity? Was it not honour enough for clay to be breathed upon, and for God to print his image upon a piece of dirt? Certainly it would be looked upon as a high kindness for any prince to give his subject his picture; was it no act of love therefore in God to give us souls endued with such bright faculties, such lively images of himself, which he might have thrust into the world with the short and brutish perceptions of a few silly senses; and like the beasts, have placed our intellectuals in our eyes or in our noses? Was it no favour to make that a sun, which he might have made but a glow-worm? no privilege to man, that he was made lord of all things below? that the world was not only his house, but his kingdom? that God should raise up one piece of earth to rule over all the rest?

Surely all these were favours, and they were the early preventing favours of a Creator: for God then knew no other title, he bore no other relation to us; there was no price given to God, that might induce him to bid Adam rise out of the earth, a man rather than a spire of grass, a twig, a stone, or some such other contemptible superiority to nothing.

No; he furnished him out into the world with all this retinue of perfections, upon no other motive, but because he had a mind to make him a glorious piece of work; a specimen of the arts of omnipotence; to stand and glister in the top and head of the creation.

Which consideration alone, I should think, might be able to compose the murmurs and the grudgings that lie festering in many men's hearts against God, caused by a surmise of God's hard dealings with them. In short, they paint God with dismal colours, and then they fly from him: they treat him with the basest of affections, which is suspicion; and look upon him as glad to take advantage against his creature.

But may we not say of such, Is this their kindness to their friend? Are these the best returns of gratitude that they can make to their Creator? For God, as their Creator, was their friend, had he never taken upon him any other respect; their very production was an obligation, and their essence a favour above a recompence: for why should God put a greater lustre upon one piece of the chaos than upon another?

The fallen angels, who will never have any other relation to God but as to a Creator, will upon this very score, had they no other sin to condemn them, stand inexcusably condemned for ingratitude; in that they sinned against that God that obliged them with so excellent a nature; with the nearest similitude to his own substance; that they sinned against him who made them so able not to have sinned.

But now God's relation of a Creator reflects the same obligation upon men that it did upon the angels; and that so great,

that though they chance to perish for their sins, yet they will go to hell obliged, and carry the marks of God's favour with them to their very destruction.

Wherefore all the hard thoughts men usually have of God, ought by all means and arts of consideration to be suppressed: for the better effecting of which, we may fix our meditation upon these two qualities that do always attend them: 1. Their unreasonableness. 2. Their danger.

1. And first for their unreasonableness. All such thoughts are not any true resemblances of our Creator, but merely our own creatures. All the sad appearances of rigour that we paint him under are not from himself, but from our misrepresentations: as the fogs and mists we sometimes see about the sun, issue not from him, but ascend from below, and owe their nearness to the sun only to the deception of the spectator.

Is it possible for him, who is love itself, to be cruel, harsh, and inexorable, to sit in heaven contriving gins and snares to trepan and ruin his poor creatures; and then to delight himself in the cries of the damned, and the woful estate of tormented souls?

There is, I confess, a sort of men, sons of thunder (but by a new way they thunder from hell, not from heaven), who delight to represent God with all the terror and hostility to men, that their own base spirit and sordid melancholy can suggest. They so account him a maker, that they scarce allow him to be a preserver: they describe him as a father without bowels; they make him to triumph, and please, and as it were recreate himself in the confusion of all his works: as if our destruction had been the sole end of our creation, and God only made us that he might afterwards have the pleasure of destroying us. As men use to nourish and breed up deer, and such kind of beasts, only that they may hunt and worry them.

With what pleasure may we hear some persons tell men that they are damned! Indeed with so much, that they seem to taste the expression more, than if they had heard that they themselves should be saved; persons fitter to blow the trumpet upon mount Sinai, or according to their old note, to "curse Meroz," than to proclaim the glad tidings of the gospel. But still, after such have said all, to bespatter God's natural kindness to the sons of men, all their furious, blustering expressions will be found not to have been copied out from any such real harshness in God, but to have issued only from the fumes of an ignorant head and an ill-natured constitution.

The divine nature is the light and the refreshment of a rational creature; God is of all beings the most amiable, suitable, and desirable. All the loveliness, the beauty, and perfection that is diffused and scattered here and there, through the whole creation, and which is so apt to excite and win our affec-

tions, is in an infinite inexhaustible manner treasured up in God. And shall we now court the stream, and in the mean time throw dirt into the fountain?

Nay, to proceed further; the very design of a creation unanswerably speaks the goodness of the Creator. For why should he communicate himself? why should he diffuse any of those perfections which he was so fully master of, by an ineffable acquiescence in himself? But his goodness was so vastly, so infinitely full, that he seemed unquiet and unsatisfied, till he had, as it were, disburdened himself by some communications of it. One would have thought that these perfections had been too rare to be communicated, so much as in resemblance, and that God would have folded them up within his own essence for ever; so that he who now contents himself with the prerogative of being the best and the greatest Being, might have been the only Being: but he chose rather to draw out, than only to possess his own fulness, to scatter something of his image upon the creature, and to see himself in effigy. From all which it follows, that hard, suspicious apprehensions of God are both injurious to him, and unreasonable in themselves.

2. The other argument against men's entertaining such thoughts of God, is the consideration of their exceeding danger. Their malignity is equal to their absurdity: for whosoever strives to beget or foment in his heart such persuasions concerning God, makes himself the devil's orator, and declaims his cause; whose proper characteristic badge it is, to be the great accuser or calumniator; for that is the force of the Greek word διάβολος.

And as he is the constant accuser of us to God, so by a restless circle of malice, he is no less industrious and artificial in accusing God to us. The first engine by which he battered down our innocence, and brought sin into the world, was by insinuating into Eve's mind thoughts that God rather envied than designed their happiness, in forbidding them to eat of that one tree: and we know what success it had, to bereave man of an almighty friend, only by a false supposal that he was his enemy.

Despair, which is the greatest instrument next to that of presumption, by which the devil draws men headlong into the fatal net of perdition, how and by what means does he cause it? Why, by representing God to the soul like himself, a tyrant and a tormentor; by tragical declamations upon his vindictive justice: that he is one full of eternal designs of revenge, rigid, and implacable, exacting the utmost farthing from a poor bankrupt creature, that is not worth it. By such diabolical rhetoric does he libel and disgrace God to the hearts of his creatures.

And he well knows that by these arts he does his business effectually; forasmuch as it is impossible for the soul to love God,

as long as it takes him for an enemy and a destroyer. We should contradict the principles of our nature, should we love God so considered; it being unnatural to love any thing clothed with the proper motives and arguments of hatred. And as it is impossible for the understanding to assent to a known apparent falsity; so it is equally impossible for the will to love, choose, and embrace God, considered as an adversary.

And from hence it is, that those who give directions to distressed afflicted consciences for the re-obtaining of comfort, wisely lay the foundation here; first of all, to fasten in the heart a deep and thorough persuasion of God's natural goodness and benevolence to all his creatures, to mankind especially, one of the choicest and most beloved parts of the creation.

And by such thoughts we are to antidote the poison of the contrary; which of themselves would quickly ripen into blasphemy, and from thence pass into a confirmed malice against God; the proper sin and character of the devil.

We are to assure ourselves of the infinite agreeableness of the divine nature to ours; that God's goodness is not only full, but exuberant; the first is his glory, the second our advantage. Indeed so full is it, that when it is said that God cannot show or exercise mercy, it is not from any defect either in him or in that, but merely for want of a suitable object: he has always a liberality inclining him to give, but we have not always a capacity fitting us to receive.

But, as I showed at first, the divine goodness and mercy is a subject too large to be wielded by our short and imperfect discourses; for that which is "over all his works" may well be above all our words:" and therefore we have cause to turn our descriptions of it into a petition for it, and to beseech God that we may come at length to enjoy what we are not able now to express.

To which God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XIX.

THE DEPRAVITY OF THE WILL THE CAUSE OF SIN.

JAMES I. 14.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

IT is natural for men, in the commission of sin, to design to themselves as much of the pleasure and as little of the guilt of sin, as possibly they can: and therefore, since the guilt of sin unavoidably remains upon the cause and author of sin, it is their great business to find out some other cause, upon which to charge it, beside themselves. Accordingly the apostle here directs these words and the foregoing, as an anticipation of, and an answer to a secret objection, that might possibly arise in some minds against God himself, as if he were the great impeller and inducer of men to sin: in which answer he clears God, by stating sin upon its true cause and original.

In the prosecution of the words, I shall only premise the explication of these two terms, and so descend to their further discussion.

1. What the apostle here means by being tempted.
2. What is intended by lust.

1. For the first of these: it is as certain that the scripture affirms some men to have been tempted by God, and particularly Abraham, as that it is positively affirmed in the verse before the text, that God tempts no man; and therefore this word must needs be of various signification. In the sense that it is ascribed to God, it signifies no more than a bare trial; as when, by some notable providence, he designs to draw forth and discover what is latent in the heart of man. In the sense that it is denied of God, it signifies an endeavour, by solicitations, and other means, to draw a man to the commission of sin: and this the most holy God can by no means own, for it would be to take the devil's work out of his hands. But neither does this sense reach the measure of the word in this place; which imports not only an endeavour to engage a man in a sinful action, but an actual and effectual engaging him with full success and prevalence, as to the last issue of the commission. And thus a man can be only tempted by his own lust; which is

2. The second thing to be explained. By *lust* the apostle here means, not that particular inordination or vice that relates to the uncleanness of the flesh; but that general stock of corruption

that possesses the whole soul, through all its respective faculties. But principally is it here to be understood of the prime and commanding faculty of all, the will, as it is possessed and principled with sinful habits and depraved inclinations. And this is the grand tempter, that tempts and seduces, so as actually to engage and determine a man to the choice of sin.

Now, though the apostle seems, by stating the cause of sin upon this, directly and principally to have it in his design only to clear and discharge God from this imputation; yet the nature of the proposition is of a wider compass, and carries it to the exclusion of all other external causes whatsoever. And therefore, in compliance with this, the business of the ensuing discourse shall be to demonstrate, that the corrupted will of man is the sole, adequate, and entire cause of all his sinful prevaricatings and deviations from the law of God.

The prosecution of which shall lie in these three particulars.

I. To show those false causes upon which men are apt to charge their sins.

II. To show positively, that lust is the true and proper cause of them.

III. To show the way by which it causes them; and that, the text tells us, is by seducing and enticing: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed."

I. And for the first of these, *the mistaken causes of sin;* in the number of which we may reckon these that follow:

1. The decree of God concerning things to come to pass, is not a proper cause for any man to charge his sins upon; though perhaps there is nothing in the world that is more abused by weak and vulgar minds in this particular. I shall not concern myself to dispute how God decrees the event of sins: but this I shall affirm in general, that be the divine decree never so absolute, yet it has no causal influence upon sinful actions; no, nor indeed upon any actions else: forasmuch as the bare decree, or purpose of a thing, produces or puts nothing in being at all. It is, as the schools call it, an immanent act; that is, such a one as rests wholly within God, and effects nothing without him. A decree, as such, is not operative or effective of the thing decreed.

Besides, whensoever God decrees that a thing shall come to pass, he decrees the manner of its production also, and that suitably to the way of working proper to that cause by which it is effected: as, if he decrees that a man shall do such or such a thing, he decrees that he shall do it freely, and agreeably to that liberty of will that his nature invests him with.

But it will be replied, Does not every thing decreed by God certainly and necessarily come to pass? And then, how can we prevent it? And if so, is there not a force upon us from Heaven to do the thing that is thus decreed?

I answer, No; for there is a great deal of difference between a mere illative necessity, which consists only in the logical consequence of one thing upon another, and between a causal necessity, which efficiently and antecedently determines and puts the faculty upon working. But so does not the divine decree: it exerts no force or impulse upon man's will, but leaves it to its own natural liberty. However, it is certain, that, by the former kind of merely illative necessity, the thing decreed will assuredly have its event. But this is no greater a necessity, than God's foreknowledge puts upon the event of the thing foreknown: for it is impossible that God should not foreknow all things that shall come to pass; and it is equally impossible, if God foreknows a thing shall come to pass, that that thing should not come to pass. And yet I suppose that none will say, that God's foreknowledge of a man's actions does, by any active influence, necessitate that man to do those actions: albeit, that this consequence stands unshakeable, that whatsoever God foreknows a man will do, that shall certainly and infallibly be done. Otherwise, where is God's omniscience and his infallibility? He knows the last point to which the will will incline its choice: he is beforehand with all futurities, and takes them into his view with the same certainty, as if they were present or actually past.

Now let any one compare these two, God's decree and his foreknowledge, and he will find that, as to the event, the same necessity passes both upon the thing decreed, and the thing foreknown. And therefore, if men will confess that God's foreknowledge does not force or push a man upon the doing of any thing, it will follow also, that neither does his decree. But if, in the scanning of either, there occurs any difficulty, to our apprehensions not resolvable, it is because God is infinite; and because an infinite mind, both in its knowledge and purposes, proceeds not according to the methods and measures of a finite understanding. And, upon this account, all the arguments, that with so much noise and confidence are urged against God's decrees, will be found but popular and fallacious, and grounded upon the application of men's ways of acting and apprehending to God; and consequently tend to disprove God's infinity as much or more than any thing else.

Let no bold or ignorant sinner, therefore, think to take sanctuary here, or to allege God's decree as an excuse for those villanies, which, with full purpose and choice of will, he committed. If God, by the unsearchable counsel of his will, designs, foresees, and orders, what yet the sinner does most freely, what is that to him? That alters not the nature of his action, any more than if I had a design to kill my enemy, and another, without any knowledge of such a design of mine, should, of his own accord, kill him. Would this free him from bearing the guilt of his own action, and undergoing the deserved punishment of a

murderer? None so apt to babble about predestination and God's decrees, as the illiterate vulgar; and from hence to take reasons for what they are to do. But what can warrant them to insist upon mysteries, when they are called to duty? and to pore and break their brains upon the hidden senses of a decree, when they have the plain and intelligible voice of a precept? God hath shown thee, O man, what is good and what is evil. He has placed life and death before thee. This is the rule by which thou must stand or fall: and no man will find that his fulfilling God's secret will, will bear him out in the breach of his revealed.

2. The influences of the heavens and of the stars imprint nothing upon men that can impel or engage them to do evil: and yet some are so sottish as to father their vices and villanies upon these: they were born, forsooth, under such a planet, and therefore they cannot choose but be thieves, or whoremasters, or rebels, all their life after. But it is strange, that heaven should prepare men for hell, and imprint those qualities upon them that should hinder them from ever coming to heaven. This would be highly injurious to the great Artificer and Maker of those bodies, that he should provide such storehouses of mischief, such irresistible conveyers of the seeds of sin into men's minds. To be born under any planet, would, in this case, be worse than not to be born at all. And to what purpose should God allow men the means to save them, if he places them under such an influence as must certainly damn them?

But these are mere fopperies; the fables and follies of old women and astrologers, who are seldom able to give an account of that which is under the immediate impressions of the heavens, that is, of the air and the elements; and upon the stock of all their acquaintance with these celestial bodies, to secure us but one fair day a month or two hence. It is all but confident conjecture, and cheating reduced to an art grounded upon the ignorance and credulity of the vulgar, who are always willing to be deceived, if any one will take the pains to deceive them.

But admitting that the heavens have an influence and operation upon inferior bodies, and that those glorious lights were not made only to be gazed upon, but to control as well as to direct the lesser world; yet still all communication between agent and patient must be in things that hold some proportion and likeness in their natures; so that one thing can pass no impression upon another, of a nature absolutely and in every respect diverse from it, provided it be also superior to it; and such a thing is a spirit in respect of body.

Upon which grounds, what intercourse can there be between the stars and a soul? How can the sun or moon, or any planet, move or incline the will this way or that way? and carry the freedom of its choice to one thing rather than another? This is absurd and unimaginable, and contrary to all the principles of

philosophy as well as religion. And therefore let no man think himself under a necessity of sinning from any such superior influence; it is not that which he sees over his head, but that which he feels within his heart, that he is to look to. The will scorns the control of any creature, either in heaven or earth; next under God it is its own master. Every man is indeed to look upon God as his Saviour; but it is himself only that can be his destroyer.

3. Neither can any man charge his sins upon the constitution and temper of his body, as the proper cause of them. The body was made to serve, and not to command. All that it can do, is only to be troublesome, but it cannot be imperious. If the soul will but maintain its right, and resolve to keep the throne, it may easily make the fleshly part, not only its subject, but its instrument; not only quiet, but useful. They are not the humours of the body, but the humours of the mind, to which men owe the irregularities of their behaviour.

The sensitive appetites having their situation in the body, do indeed follow the peculiar complexion and temper of it: but reason is a thing that is placed solely and entirely in the soul, and so depends not upon those inferior faculties; but though it is sometimes solicited by them, yet it is in its power, whether or no it will be prevailed upon. And for all the noise, and hurry, and tumult, that is often raised amongst them; yet reason, like the uppermost region of the air, is not at all subject to the disturbances that are below. And so long as the soul listens to reason, the inferior appetites may bawl indeed, but they cannot persuade. Let a beggar be never so impudently craving and importunate, yet the door may be shut against him, and then he must be either quiet, or only troublesome to himself.

In vain therefore does any man for his excuse allege the solicitations of his appetites, against the dictates of his reason: it is, as if in a rebellion a man should act by the summons of a constable, against the command and proclamation of his prince. No man is made an adulterer, a drunkard, or an idle person by his body; his body indeed may incline him to be so, but it is his will only that makes him so. And be the clamours and requests of appetite never so earnest, reason has still a negative voice upon them; and if it shall be pleased but to advise upon the matter, they cease and are extinct, and can never pass into action.

If indeed reason shall give way to these sensual motions, and take the bit into its mouth, and suffer itself to be rid; there is no doubt, but it may be made a servant of servants, a slave and a drudge to all the tyrannies of a domineering sensuality. But this will be no apology before God, who endued it with a perfect sovereignty, and put the government of the whole soul into its hands.

And besides, there have been some in the world, who by the conduct of their reason have made their way to virtue, through all the disadvantages of their natural constitution. Philosophy has done it in many, and religion may do it in all. Let no man therefore charge his sins upon that part of himself, that cannot possibly sin without the consent of his will.

4. And lastly, to proceed yet higher: no man can justly charge his sins upon the devil, as the cause of them; for God has not put it into the power of our mortal enemy to ruin us without ourselves; which yet he had done, had it been in the devil's power to force us to sin. The devil can only tempt and allure, but compel he cannot; he may inveigle, but he cannot command our choice; and no man yet ever suffered death, who did not choose death: the fisher may propose and play the bait before the fish, but he cannot force it to swallow it. And so, whatsoever the devil does, he does by insinuation, and not by compulsion.

The Spirit of God assures us, that he may be resisted, and that upon a vigorous resistance, he will fly. He never conquers any, but those that yield; a spiritual fort is never taken by force, but by surrender. And when a man is as willing to be ruined, as he is to ruin him, it is that, that makes the devil triumphant and victorious. How slyly and creepingly did he address himself to our first parents! which surely his pride would never have let him do, could he have effected their downfall by force, without temptation.

It is confessed indeed, that the guilt of those sins that the devil tempts us to, will rest upon him; but not so as to discharge us. He that persuades a man to rob a house, is guilty of the sin he persuades him to, but not in the same manner that he is who committed the robbery; for it was in his power, after all the other's persuasions, to have forborne the fact, and to have maintained his innocence: for no man is a thief or a villain against his will.

In vain therefore do men shift off their sins upon the devil, whose greatest arts they may frustrate, whose strongest solicitations they may make ineffectual: for it is in their power, as I may so speak, in some respect, to make the devil himself innocent. But still the load of all must lie upon him: and it is not he that commits, but he that tempts to sin, that must be the sinner. It seems to be with the devil, in respect of the disorders of the soul, as it is with the spleen, in respect of the distempers of the body; whatsoever is amiss or indisposed, the charge is sure to lie there.

But howsoever men may mock themselves with such evasions, yet God will not be mocked, who knows that he left the soul in its own keeping, and made the will free, and not to be forced: and therefore these fig-leaves will fall off, when he shall come to

scrutiny and examination. Every man shall bear his own burden, and the devil himself shall have but what is his due.

And thus I have done with the first particular proposed, namely, to show and remove the mistaken causes upon which men are apt to charge their sins; concerning which, before I proceed any further, I shall remark this by way of caution: that though I deny any of these to be the proper causes of sin, yet it is not to be denied, but that they are often very great promoters of sin, where they meet with a corrupt heart and a depraved will. And it is not to be questioned, but that many thousands now in hell might have gone thither in a calmer and a more cleanly way at least, had they not been hurried and pushed on by impetuous temptations, by an ill constitution, and by such opportunities and circumstances of life, as mightily suited their corruption, and so drew it forth to a pitch of acting higher and more outrageous than ordinary.

For there is no doubt but an ill mind in an ill-disposed body will carry a man forth to those sins, that otherwise it would not, if lodged in a body of a better and more benign temperament. As a sword, covered with rust, will wound much more dangerously, where it does wound, than it could do if it were bright and clean. And it is also as certain, that were it not for the devil's suggestions, the bare corruption of man's nature would not engage him in many of those enormities, that frequently rage in the lives of some persons. Nor is it to be denied, but that the circumstances and ways of life, that Providence sometimes casts men under, unavoidably expose them to those occasions of sin, that entangle them in those actions, that they would never have been guilty of, had they lived free from those occasions.

All this is very true; and therefore, besides those internal impressions of grace, by which God sanctifies the heart, and effectually changes the will, many are accountable to his mercy for those external and inferior assistances of grace. As, that he restrains the fury of the tempter; that he sends them into the world with a well-tempered and rightly disposed body; and lastly, that he casts the course of their life out of most of the snares and occasions of sin: so that they can with much more ease be virtuous than other men; and if they sin, they sin merely upon the stock of an internal overflowing malice; which is instead of a tempter, a devil, and all sinful occasions to itself.

But on the other side, where God denies a man these advantages, and casts him under all the forementioned disadvantages of virtue, and decoys to sin; it is yet most certain that they lay upon him no necessity of sinning. The will is still entire, and may break through all these impediments: it may be virtuous, though indeed at the price of a greater trouble and a more afflicting endeavour.

II. I come now to the second particular; namely, to show that *the proper and effectual cause of sin is the depraved will of man,* expressed by the apostle here under the name of *lust.* The proof of which is not very difficult; for all other causes being removed, it remains that it can be only this. We have the word of Christ himself, that it is from within, from the heart, that envyings, wrath, bitterness, adulteries, fornications, and other such impurities do proceed. To heap up all the several places of scripture that bear witness to this, would be infinite and endless: and therefore supposing it sufficiently clear from scripture, that a corrupt will is the sole cause of all sinful actions, I shall endeavour yet further to evince the same by arguments and reasons.

1. The first shall be taken from the office of the will, which is to command and govern all the rest of the faculties; and therefore all disorder must unavoidably begin here. Nothing can be done without a commission from the will; whereupon, if any thing be done sinfully, the fault lies in him that issued out the commission. The economy of the powers and actions of the soul is a real government; and a government cannot be defective without some failure and defect in the governor.

2. The second argument shall be taken from every man's experience of himself and his own actions; upon an impartial survey of which he shall find, that before the doing of any thing sinful or suspicious, there passes a certain debate in the soul about it, whether it shall or it shall not be done; and after all argumentations for and against, the last issue and result follows the casting voice of the will. This is that which turns the balance, that gives the final determination, and therefore the guilt of every action must inevitably rest here.

3. A third reason is from this, that the same man, upon the proposal of the same object, and that under the same circumstances, yet makes a different choice at one time from what he does at another; and therefore the moral difference of actions, in respect of the good or evil of them, must of necessity be resolved into some principle within him; and that is his will. Which remaining one and the same, according to its own absoluteness and freedom, sometimes turns itself to one thing, sometimes to another.

4. The fourth and last reason shall be from this, that even the souls in hell continue to sin. and therefore the productive principle of sin must needs be the will.

The consequence appears from hence, because those sins cannot possibly proceed from the body, or the irregular motions of the sensitive appetite; since the soul in this estate is divided from these: nor yet from the temptations of the devil; for he tempts only that he may bring the soul to hell; but when he has it once there, of a tempter he becomes a tormentor. Wherefore they must needs

flow from some principle inherent in the soul; and that is the will, which is as inseparable from the soul, as its own substance.

I shall not insist upon any further proofs of so plain a truth; let these suffice to persuade every man to turn his eyes inward, to seek for the traitor in his own bosom; for here is the source and fountain of all those enormities that stream forth in a man's conversation. And therefore it is a great vanity to declaim against any thing without us, as if we were led captive by some external force: for neither the flesh, the world, nor the devil, no, nor all of them together, could be able to annoy us, if our wills were but faithful to us. Were the spirit but willing, the flesh would be weak in a good sense; and were we but crucified to the world, the world would be as much crucified to us. Nay, and lastly, the devil himself would be but a contemptible adversary, were he not sure of a correspondent and a party that held intelligence with him in our own breasts. All the blowing of the fire put under a cauldron could never make it boil over, were there not a fulness of water within it.

Some are so stupid as to patronize their sins with a plea, that they cannot, they have not power to do otherwise; but where the will is for virtue, it will either find or make power. The truth is, men are in love with their vices, their will is enthralled, and here is all the restraint that is put upon them; they suffer no violence, but from delight; no captivity, but from pleasure. But if a man binds his own hands, it will be but a poor excuse to plead that he had no use of them, when his work shall be required of him.

III. I come now to the third and last thing; and that is, to show *the way by which a corrupt will* (here expressed by the name of *lust) is the cause of sin;* and that is, by "drawing a man aside, and enticing him."

1. And for the first of these: it seduces, or draws a man aside; it actually takes himself from the ways of duty: for as in all motion there is the relinquishment of one term before there can be the acquisition of another; so the soul must pass from its adherence to virtue, before it can engage in a course of sin. It must first be unfastened and removed from its former bottom, and then it may with ease be pitched upon any other.

Now the first and leading attempt of lust, is to possess the mind with a kind of loathing and disgust of virtue, as a thing harsh and insipid, and administering no kind of pleasure and satisfaction; all the paths of it are represented as planted with thorns, as full of horror, as made up of nothing but the severities of discipline, and the rigours of unnatural abridgments; and by these means lust disgraces and libels virtue out of practice: it brings it out of favour with the will and the affections, and then we know that the natural consequence of being out of favour with them, is to be laid aside by them.

This being done, and the mind clear, it is now ready for any new impression, and to receive the offers and proposals of vice: and vice and virtue are like other enemies, one never supplants the other, but with a design to step into its place, and amongst contraries, when one is driven out, the other usually takes possession.

Prevail but with a man to remit the prosecution of his duty, and he lies open to all vicious practices imaginable; he offers his mind, as it were, a blank for sin to write what it pleases upon it: and seldom was it known that omissions of virtue went alone, but were presently followed with enormous commissions of sin.

2. The other course that lust takes to entangle a man in sin, is by enticing; that is, by using arguments and rhetoric, to set off sin to him with the best advantage, and the fairest gloss. And this it does these two following ways:

(1.) By representing the pleasures of sin, stripped of all the troubles and inconveniences of sin. There is no sin but is attended and surrounded with so many miseries and adherent bitternesses, that it is at the best but like a single drop of honey in a sea of gall. Who can extract and fetch it out? It is to be done only by fancy and imaginary speculation. But when a man comes to the real instances of practice and experience, he will find the bitter to intermingle with the sweet, and that with a very great predominance: he will find the sweetness to vanish and disappear, and to be swallowed up in those unequal mixtures of sharpness that are conveyed with it.

But now it is the act of lust, to show the quintessence and the refined part of a sinful action, separate from all its dregs and indecencies, so to recommend it to the apprehension of a deluded sinner. It will present you only with the fair side, and tell you what pleasure and satisfaction you shall reap from such or such an action; but it never reminds you of the regret and remorse of conscience that will accompany it; of the shame and vengeance that will follow it. No; lust is too skilful a sophister, and has at least this part of perfection, to conceal its imperfections.

Lust never deals impartially with the choice, so as to confront the whole good with the whole evil of an object; but declaims amply and magnificently of one, while it is wholly silent of the other. And it is observable, that there are few things that present so entirely bad an appearance, but admit of very plausible pleas and flourishes of commendation. Sin prevails upon the affections, not so much by the suitableness of the thing proposed, as by the art of the proposal.

As for instance, should I tell a thirsty man that I had for him a drink of a noble colour, a quick taste, and a fragrant smell; surely there could be nothing in this description, but must raise and inflame his appetite: but should I tell him that it was poison,

that was of this so rare a taste, colour, and smell, this would be a full allay to his desire, and a sufficient counter-charm to all its other alluring qualities.

It is no question but Judas's covetousness addressed his sin to him in this manner, and struck his apprehension with the convenience of having so much money, and gaining it with so much ease; but it told him nothing of the black despair and the disastrous death that was to follow it. For had this been offered to his thoughts at the same time, it is no doubt but it must have dashed the temptation, and made it cheap and contemptible.

(2.) Lust entices, by representing that pleasure that is in sin greater than indeed it is: it swells the proportions of every thing, and shows them, as it were, through a magnifying-glass, greatened and multiplied by desire and expectation; which always exhibit objects to the soul, not as they are, but as they would have them be.

Nothing cheats a man so much as expectation: it conceives with the air, and grows big with the wind; and like a dream, it promises high, but performs nothing. For the truth is, even in lawful enjoyments, God has put an emptiness, and made it the very specific and inseparable property of the creature. So that Solomon, who had both the largest measure of those enjoyments, and of wisdom to pass a right judgment upon them, has given the world a full account and declaration of their vanity and dissatisfaction, upon the credit of a long and unparalleled experience. And if the very condition of the creature gives it such a shortness and hollowness, and disproportion to the desires of a rational soul, even in the most innocent and allowed pleasures; what shall we think of the pleasures of sin, which receive a further embasement and diminution from the superaddition of a curse?

They are cursed like the earth, not only with barrenness, but with briars and thorns; there is not only a fallacy, but a sting in them: and consequently they are rendered worse than nothing; a reed that not only deceives, but also pierces the hand that leans upon it.

But the exceeding vanity of every sinful pleasure will appear, by considering both the latitude of its extent, and the length of its duration.

1. And first, for the latitude or measure of its extent. It seldom gratifies but one sense at a time; and if it should diffuse a universal enjoyment to them all, yet it reaches not the better, the more capacious and more apprehensive part of man, his soul: that is so far from communicating with the senses, that in all their revels it is pensive and melancholy, and afflicted with inward remorses from an unsatisfied, if not also an accusing conscience.

2. And then secondly, for its duration or continuance. It is

but for a moment; it affects and leaves the sense in an instant, and scarce affords so much scope as for reflection: the whole course of such pleasures passes like a tale that is told; a tale, that after it is told, proves a lie. How transient and vanishing are the pleasures of the epicure, that expire with a taste, and determine with the poor and momentary gratifications of his palate! And yet who thinks he shares so largely of the pleasures of sin as he!

But when sin entices, it takes no notice of these littlenesses and flaws in the enjoyment: it speaks loftily, and undertakes largely; it offers mountains and kingdoms, and never suffers a man to purchase a right judgment of it, but at the dear rate of a disappointment; and then he finds how those offers sink and dwindle into nothing; and what a pitiful skeleton of an enjoyment that is, that at first dazzled his apprehensions with such glistering pretences and glorious overtures of pleasure.

He, therefore, that would stand upon his guard against all the enticements of his corruption, must fortify himself with this consideration, that sin never makes any proposal, whatsoever show of advantage it may have, but it is with an intent to abuse and deceive him. And consequently, that it is an infinite folly to seek for pleasure or satisfaction but in the ways of duty: the only thing that leads and unites to the great inexhaustible Fountain of satisfaction: "in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

SERMON XX.

ON MAN'S FORFEITURE OF THE LOVE OF HIS CREATOR.

ISAIAH XXVII. 11.

For it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.

This chapter is one of the eloquent strains of the most oratorical of the prophets, describing a severe judgment to be inflicted on the Jews, in the deplorable destruction of Jerusalem, the demolishing their stately buildings, and the wasting their pleasant and delightful habitations. All this is set down in the 10th and 11th verses; "The defenced city shall be desolate:" no defence nor munition can keep out a judgment, when commissioned by God to enter. "And the habitation forsaken:" when God forsakes a place, the inhabitants do not stay long behind. "And there shall the calf feed, there shall he lie down:" when men forget their Maker, and degenerate into brutish affections, it is but just with him, that they who have changed affections with beasts, should change dwellings with them too. "When the boughs thereof are withered," &c. For the exposition of these words, we must note, that they admit of a double construction.

1. They may be either understood literally, and so they set forth the destruction of Jerusalem, in the devastation of the pleasant gardens and vineyards; which shall be left so desolate, that the vines and trees shall wither, and poor women shall come and gather them into bundles, for the making of fires, and heating ovens. Thus we see the vintage of sin, and the clusters of Sodom; they destroy the vines, and fire the vineyard.

2. Another sense of these words is figurative and metaphorical: and so this expression, "When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off," signifies thus much: When the inhabitants have filled up the measure of their sins, when they are spiritually withered and dead, and fruitful to no good work, then they shall be broken off, and ruined with the heaviest destruction. And to aggravate this judgment, to put an edge upon this misery, it is added in the next words, that "women shall come and set them on fire:" that is, a womanish and effeminate generation of men (for such were the Babylonians) shall triumph over them. A hint of their luxury we have in the seventh chapter of Joshua;

it was a Babylonish garment that enamoured Achan. We know how Lucian brings in Menippus, speaking of Sardanapalus, one of the womanish kings of Babylon. Ἐπίτρεψον μὴ ὦ Ἑρμῆ τὴν Σαρδανάπαλον πατάξαι κατὰ κόρρης. Now a generous spirit, that has the least spark of honour and virility, does not feel so much smart in the punishment, as in the unworthiness of the hand that does inflict it. And this was the emphasis of Samson's disgrace, to be held in captivity by a woman. And it is the height and aggravation of this judgment, for men to be fired and destroyed by women; the valiant to be made a prey to the luxurious.

And thus having described the judgment, he does in the next words assign a reason of it: "For it is a people of no understanding." One would have thought that ignorance should have excused the sin: he that sins out of ignorance is rather to be pitied than punished. Is any father so cruel, so hard-hearted, as to disown and cast off his son, because he is a fool? No; an innocent ignorance excuses from sin, both before God and man: and God himself will own that maxim of equity, *Ignorantia excusat peccatum.* But when there is another sort of ignorance, which is not an ignorance of an empty understanding, but of a depraved heart; such an ignorance as does not only consist in a bare privation, but in a corrupt disposition: where the understanding is like that sort of blind serpents, whose blindness is attended with much venom and malignity. This was such a blindness as struck the Sodomites; there was darkness in their eyes, and withal villany in their hearts. There is an ignorance that could not be remedied; the schools call it an invincible ignorance, and this excuses from sin, and that deservedly; for this is a man's unhappiness, not his fault. But there is also an affected ignorance, such a one as is contracted by a wilful neglect of the means; and this is not excusing, but condemning. Such a want of understanding it was, that is here charged upon the Jews, as the sad occasion of this woful punishment: for they had large and enriching means of grace; the mysteries of God, the *arcana cœli*, were entrusted with them, and explained to them; the fountains of this great deep of knowledge were broken up before them. And in this case to be ignorant; in the midst of light to be in darkness; for an Israel to have an Egypt in a Goshen; this is highly provoking, and must justly cause God to lay hold on vengeance. Where by the way we observe, that some want of understanding, some ignorance is so far from excusing sin, that it is its highest aggravation: "It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them," &c.

Here we ought also to note, in what strange terms God expresses his anger. It is not said, the Lord, the just God will punish them: this was not so wonderful: little to be expected from God's justice, but a sinner's misery. No; God assumes the

most endearing titles, and under them gives the severest judgments, he joins the Creator and the destroyer, such expressions as almost confute one another: he clothes himself in the robes of mercy, and in these pronounces the sentence of death upon the sinner.

From the words thus explained, we may naturally deduce these two observations.

I. The relation of a Creator strongly engages God to put forth acts of love and favour towards his creature. This is clear from the strength of the antithesis in these words, "he that made them will not save them:" where, for the advantage of the expression, it is redoubled, "he that formed them will show them no favour." As if he should say, it may seem strange to you that your Creator, which very name speaks nothing but bowels of love and tenderness, should break and ruin, utterly confound and destroy you. Yet thus it must be, though the relation make it strange, yet your sins will make it true.

II. Sin does totally disengage God from all those acts of love and goodness to the creature, that the relation of a Creator can engage him to.

Or more clearly thus:

There is more provocation in sin for God to destroy, than there is obligation upon him as a Creator to preserve the creature.

I. Conclusion the first, viz. that the relation of a Creator strongly obliges God to put forth acts of love and favour towards his creature.

The strength of this obligement appears in these two considerations:

1st. That it is natural; and natural obligements, as well as natural operations, are always the strongest.

2dly. That God put this obligement upon himself; therefore it must needs be a great and a strong one: and this is clear, because the relation of a Creator is, in order of nature, antecedent to the being of the creature; which not existing, could not oblige God to create it, or assume this relation.

There are three engaging things that are implied in the creature's relation to God, that oblige him to manifest himself in a way of goodness to it.

1. The first is, the extract or original of the creature's being, which is from God himself. It is the nature of every artificer, to tender and esteem his own work: and if God should not love his creature, it would reflect some disparagement upon his workmanship, that he should make any thing which he could not own. God's power never produces what his goodness cannot embrace. God oftentimes, in the same man, distinguishes between the sinner and the creature; as a creature he can love him, while as a sinner he does afflict him. Hence arises that dearness between

the parent and the child. What wonder is it to see him in his father's arms, who before lay in his loins? or to see that child admitted to the bosom, that before lay in the womb? It is mentioned as a sign of strange unnatural disaffection in the ostrich, that it hardens itself against its young ones, Job xxxix. 16. It has a stony heart without love; a flint without fire. God is not a heathen god, a Saturn, to devour his children. It casts an obligement upon the very place where we are born to regard us; and if there be no father known, it ought not only to be our country, but our parent.

Now the creature's deriving its being from God, includes in it two other endearing considerations.

(1.) It puts a certain likeness between God and the creature. The foundation of love is laid in the likeness that is between things; now the likeness that is between the creature and the Creator, consists in this, that he has taken it into the participation and society of that great privilege of being: and it is in respect of this, that the creature is a copy of God, a rough draught of some perfection that is in his Maker. What is written in a large fair character in him, is imprinted upon the creature in a small. Now although God loathes and abominates any likeness that we make of him, yet he loves and embraces the likeness that he has drawn of himself. And as, in respect of holiness, it is not the perfection of it only that God accepts, but he is ready to cherish our very breathings and longings after righteousness; he will embrace purity, not only in practice, but in inclination. So for the perfections of being; though he does absolutely acquiesce in the contemplation of his own, yet he does not despise those weaker draughts of it, visible in created things; but is ready to own whatsoever he sees of himself in the creature: and, like the sun, can, with much serenity, behold his image in the lowest waters. Every thing has a strong interest in that, by which it had its being and beginning.

(2.) Whatsoever comes from God, by way of creation, is good; and so, by reason of the native agreement that is between that and the will of God, there naturally does result an act of love: for where there is nothing but goodness on the creature's part, there can be nothing but love on God's. Although the acts of God's love do not always presuppose a moral goodness; for he loves the persons of the elect, while they are unconverted: yet it is probable, that the acts of dislike presuppose a want of that goodness. Though a man is not always good before God loves him, yet many are so favourable as to think, that he is always evil before he hates him; those especially that are of this judgment, that in the very act of man's reprobation, God did not reprobate him as a man, but as a sinner. Now the creature as such, and immediately issuing from the hands of God, has no evil cleaving to it, to provoke his detestation; but, like a sword,

comes shining out of the hands of the artificer, though afterward it chance to gather rust. "God made man upright;" however since, "he has sought out to himself many inventions." And this is the first consideration that endears the creature to God, viz. the original of its being.

2. The second thing that bespeaks God's love to the creature, is the dependence of its being upon God. As the fruit is produced by the tree, so it hangs upon the tree. If by creation the creature is endeared to God, then much more by its dependence upon him; for this is founded upon a continual creation. Every creature is upheld from relapsing into nothing, by a continual influence of that creative power by which it was made. A moral dependence upon any one, that is, the voluntary placing of all a man's hopes and confidence upon the goodness of such a one, puts a strong obligement upon the party confided in, to employ the utmost of his power and interest to preserve and defend that man. For to desert him who relies upon me; to elude those hopes, that have no refuge but myself; for that reed, upon which I lean, to pierce my hand; this is a thing that ordinary humanity would detest. But now the natural dependence of the creature upon God is much greater, and consequently much more obliging than the moral dependence of one man upon another; forasmuch as that is necessary, this voluntary, and from choice. If I desert a man that depends upon me, I disappoint his hopes; but if God forsakes the creature, he disappoints his being. Not to give a being to a thing, could be no misery to it; because to be miserable, presupposes first to be: but when it has a being, then to desert or forsake it, this is a calamity and an evil to that very existence of which God himself was the author; and he will not thus deal with the creature till he is provoked. The same goodness which did incite him to make a thing before it was, certainly now it is made, will much more oblige him to preserve it. Not to beget a child, could be no injury to it; but when it is begot, and born, to deny it food and education, this is an inhuman, an unfatherly temper. He that does not provide for his family, the Spirit of God counts him "worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. v. 8; and the reason is, because his family has a dependence upon him. The creature's depending upon God, engages him to uphold it with love and mercy. A poor empty bladder, if we rely upon it, will keep us from sinking; if we hold fast upon any thing, it will rescue us from falling. He that took Israel, as an eagle does her young, and bore him upon his wings, as it is elegantly expressed, Deut. xxxii. 11, would he, think you, without cause have let him fall? This we may be assured of, that those impressions of love and compassion, that are in us, are also in God; only with this difference, that in him they are infinite.

3. The third consideration that engages the love of God to the creature, is this; that the end of the creature's being is God's

glory. Now God, that loves his own glory, must needs also respect the instrument that advances it. There is no artificer, that intends a work that would break his tools. Why does a man tender and regard his servant, but because he is for his use? The ability and aptness of the creature for the serving of God's use, does induce God so far to preserve him. For he that has a rational respect to the end, must of necessity bear a suitable affection to the means. The being of the creatures stands related by the tie of a natural connexion to God's glory; they are the materials of his praise. Hence we have the business excellently stated by the prophet Isaiah, ch. xxxviii. 18, 19, "The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee." God's glory is the motto inscribed upon every created being; and wheresoever God reads, he owns this superscription. It is all the creature has, under God's hand and seal, to show for its life. As God stamped a mark upon Cain to secure him from men, so it is this that secures us in respect of God. Whatsoever we are, we are not our own, but his. We are, by nature, servants to the interest of his glory; and if my life, my actions are devoted to such a one's service, I may very well claim a maintenance from him whose interest I serve. And thus much of the third thing that endears God's love to the creature, viz. the designation of its being for the use of his glory.

II. I proceed to the second proposition, to show how sin disengages and takes off God from all those acts of favour, that the relation of a creation engaged him to.

1. It turns that which, in itself, is an obligation of mercy, to be an aggravation of the offence. True it is, to make a creature, to give it being upon a rational ground, is an argument of love. But for a creature to sin against him, from whom it had its whole being; and that a puny creature, the first-born of nothing, a piece of creeping clay, one whom, as God created, so he might uncreate with a breath; for such a one to fly in his Creator's face! this gives a deeper dye to sin; this makes it ten times more sinful. "What, my son! the son of my womb! the son of my vows! dost thou give thy strength to women?" What, my creature! the work of my hands! the product of my power! and the object of my care! dost thou sin against me? dost thou dishonour me? The treason of an Absalom, the stab of a Brutus, is doubled by the circumstance of so near a relation. The nearer the party that offends, the distance is so much the wider. *Nemo tam prope, tam proculque;* none so near in respect of alliance, none so far off in respect of the offence. Between friends, the same friendship that passes by some affronts, heightens others. It is the cause why some are pardoned, and why some cannot, ought not to be pardoned. Such a one speaks slightly of me, but

my friendship pleads his pardon; yes, but he endeavoured to take away my life, my reputation: the same friendship speaks this injury unpardonable; in Psalm lv. 12, 13, "If it had been an enemy, I could have borne it; but it was thou, mine equal, mine acquaintance." The relation of a Creator is always very strong, and, before sin, this strength appears in love; but after sin, the same strength vents itself in revenge. Where it meets with holiness, it protects; where it meets with sin, it destroys: as the same wind that carries a ship well ballasted, if ill rigged or accoutred, it drowns it. The same strength of constitution that keeps off diseases from the body, when it comes to be infected, and to comply with a disease, quickens its dissolution. The same argument that proves this assertion, by a subtile inversion of the terms, will prove the contrary. The same relation of a Creator, that endears God to the innocent, fires him against a sinner. God looks upon the soul, as Amnon did upon Tamar; while it was a virgin, he loved it: but now it is defloured, he hates it. We read in the law, that he that cursed his father was to be stoned to death: we do not read, that if he had cursed another, he had been dealt withal so severely. One would have thought that the nearness of a father would have saved him; but it was this alone that condemned him. Build not, therefore, upon the sandy foundation of a false surmise of God's mercy, as a Creator; for this relation is, as I may so speak, indifferent, and may be determined, as to its influence, either to be helpful or destructive, according to the goodness or badness of the creature. While thou doest well, it will embrace thee; but upon the least transgression, it will confound thee. The same sword that now hangs by thy side, and defends thee, may be one day brought to run thee through.

2. Sin disengages God from showing love to the creature, by taking away that similitude that is between God and him; which (as has been observed) was one cause of that love. The creature, indeed, stills retains that resemblance of God that consists in being; but the greatest resemblance, that consists in moral perfections, this is totally lost and defaced. A mere existence or being is an indifferent thing, it is a *rasa tabula*, that may be coloured over with sin or holiness: and accordingly it receives its value from these; as a picture is esteemed not from the materials upon which it is drawn, but from the draught itself. Holiness elevates the worth of the being in which it is, and is of more value than the being itself; as in scarlet, the bare dye is of greater value than the cloth. Sin debases the being in which it is; and makes the soul more unlike God, in respect of its qualities, than it is like him in respect of its substance. It is not the alliance of flesh and blood, but the resemblance of virtue, that makes the greatest likeness between the father and the son. Consanguinity and likeness of features will not so much incite

him to love, as a dissimilitude, by reason of vice, will cause him to disinherit him. Better have no son, than a prodigal, profane, unclean son; better not to be a man, than an irreligious man; better an innocent nothing, than a sinful being. God has shed some of his perfections upon the natural fabric of the soul, in that he made it a spiritual immaterial substance, refined from all the dross of body and matter: but the chief perfection of it consisted in this, that he did adorn it with holiness. As the temple of Solomon was glorious, because built with cedar; but its chief magnificence was the overlaying it with gold. But now, when this part of God's image is blotted out, he cannot read his likeness in the soul's other perfections. Be the soul ever so spiritual in its substance, yet if it be carnal in its affections; be it ever so purified from the grossness of body, yet if it be polluted with the corruption of sin; it has nothing to show why God should not disown it, even to its eternal perdition. If we meet with a letter drawn over with filthy, scurrilous, unbecoming lines, the fineness of the paper will not rescue it from the fire. It is not thy strength, thy wit, thy eloquence, that God so much regards; these indeed may adorn thee, but it is thy holiness that must save thee. A sinner appearing before God, adorned with the greatest confluence of natural endowments, is like Agag presenting himself to Samuel in his costly robes: the richness of his attire could not compound for the vileness of his person. When those glorious pleas shall be produced in the court of heaven, "We have prophesied, we have cast out devils, we have wrought wonders;" God shall answer them with one word, weightier than them all, "But ye have sinned." Howsoever we flatter ourselves, and misjudge of things, yet God will overlook all the natural perfections of the soul, and punish us for want of moral.

3. Sin discharges God from showing love to the creature, by taking off the creature from his dependence upon God. I know is cannot dissolve its natural dependence: for in God "we live, and move, and have our being," Acts xvii. 28, whether we will or no. But our moral dependence, which is a filial reliance and recumbency upon God, this it destroys. For in sin the creature quits his hold of God, and seeks to shift for himself, to find his happiness within the centre of his own endeavours, totally departing and apostatizing from God; for sin is properly defined, *aversio à Creatore ad creaturam.* It was an absolute, independent happiness that was aimed at in the first sin, which made it so detestable. Our first parents, they would be as gods, they would have an *αὐτάρκεια*, a self-sufficience; they would stand upon their own bottom, without the support of divine influence; they would fetch all their happiness from within, without repairing to the bounty of Providence. Now when the creature depends upon God, and yet scorns to own this dependence; but in a high strain of arrogance would derive his satisfaction entirely from himself:

this is the highest provocation. For one to live upon an alms, and yet to scorn an alms; to be a proud beggar; through weakness to lean upon another, and yet through pride to pretend to go alone: this is odious and insufferable; a temper made up of those two abominable ingredients, pride and ingratitude. He that pretends to live upon his own means, does not deserve the continuance of his pension: he that will not acknowledge his felicity from his Creator, deserves to lose it. If we depart and quit our reliance upon God, it is but equitable for him to let go his hold of us; if we desire to be miserable, can we blame him if he punisheth us with the answer of our own desires? God is not so married to us by creation, but if we leave him voluntarily, it may be the just cause of a perpetual divorce. Yea, sin proceeds so far, as that although the creature cannot dissolve its natural dependence upon God, yet there is nothing that it desires more, and it proceeds to attempt it as far as it is able, that is, in a wish. What would the damned forlorn spirits give to wring themselves out of God's hand by annihilation? What would the devils give for a full discharge from their being? Job speaks the natural desire of a tormented sinner, Job vi. 8, 9, "Oh that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! even that it would please God to destroy me!" And thus we see how sin takes off the creature from its dependence upon God: first, in the commission of sin he let go his dependence, as to his confidence; and then, in the punishment of sin, he would willingly let it go as to his very being.

4. Sin disengages the love of God to the creature, because it renders the creature useless, as to the end for which it was designed. Things whose essence and being stand in relation to such an end, have their virtue and value from their fitness to attain it. Every thing is ennobled from its use, and debased as far as it is useless. As long as a man continues an instrument of God's glory, so long his title to life and happiness stands sure, and no longer. But now sin, in scripture and in God's account, is the death of the soul; Eph. ii. 1, "We were dead in trespasses and sins." Now death makes a thing utterly useless, because it renders it totally inactive; and in things that are naturally active, that which deprives them of their action bereaves them of their use. The soul, by reason of sin, is unable to act spiritually; for sin has disordered the soul, and turned the force and edge of all its operations against God: so that now it can bring no glory to God by doing, but only by suffering, and being made miserable. It is now unfit to obey his commands, and fit only to endure his strokes. It is incapable, by any active communion or converse with him, to enjoy his love, and a proper object only to bear his anger and revenge. We may take the case in this similitude: A physician or chirurgeon has a servant; while this servant lives honestly with him, he is fit to be used, and to be

employed in his occasions; but if this servant should commit a felony, and for that be condemned, he can then be actively serviceable to him no longer; he is fit only for him to dissect, and make an object upon which to show the experiments of his skill. So while man was yet innocent, he was fit to be used and employed by God in a way of active obedience; but now having sinned, and being sentenced by the law to death as a malefactor, he is a fit matter only for God to torment, and show the wonders of his vindictive justice upon. In short, sin has unframed the fabric of the whole man; it has made all the members and faculties of his body and soul weapons of unrighteousness, and placed them in open defiance against God. But now God made the world, and the fulness thereof, to display the riches of his glory, and he continues it to this day to advance his great name, and for no other cause. And it is very probable (which is worth our observation) that if other creatures should bring no more glory to God, within the sphere of their actings, than man does, that the world could not stand, but would certainly provoke God to throw it back into confusion. So long therefore as man continues in sin, he is a useless lump, a burden to God that made him, and to the earth that bears him, a usurper of his being, and a devourer of the creatures that do God more honour and service than himself, not able to think, speak, or do any thing for his glory. And can God preserve such a creature with any credit to his goodness? Will he strain the riches of his mercy to the damage of his honour? Man would provide for his credit better than so; certainly therefore the wise God will much more.

APPLICATION.

First use, is to obviate and take off that usual and common argument, that is frequently in the mouths of the ignorant, and in the hearts of the most knowing; that certainly God would never make them to destroy them; and therefore since he has made them, they roundly conclude that he will not destroy them. Erasmus said, that he could not presume so far as to hope for heaven; but he thought God was too merciful to send him to hell. Now the very design of the Spirit in these words is to anticipate and forestall this objection, which he knew was apt to rise in the hearts of men, who upon the hearing of God's fiery judgments are ready to shelter themselves under such poor groundless considerations. How does a poor soul strive to dispute and baffle itself into this persuasion! but how feeble and inconsequent are all his arguments! God made thee, and formed thee: true; but since thou hast sinned against so dear a relation, this very thing is an argument that he should destroy thee; God has imprinted his image upon thee, but sin has defaced it. God is the potter, and thou the vessel; but when the potter has made a vessel, if it chance to leak, or get a crack, the very same hand

that made it will break it in pieces. Thou art God's possession, a creature designed for his use: true; but sin has made thee totally useless. Thy soul was made a habitation for God himself, but sin and Satan have got it in possession: and when a house or castle is possessed by the enemy, the very owner himself will set it on fire. As long as thou dost remain entire, thou mayest have recourse to God, and he will receive and own thee, upon this score, that thou art his workmanship; but if broken and defiled through sin, he will not own thee upon this account. As when a man makes and sells a watch, while it is entire we may return it, and he will own it, because he made it; but when it is broken, there is no returning it; though it were of his own making, yet he will not receive it. All the wheels, the faculties of the soul, they are disordered and broken; all the motions of it are depraved: and can God, who made nothing but what was good, who gave every thing its due and exact proportion, acknowledge and embrace such a piece of disorder? A child may be so disfigured and deformed, and changed from its native visage by some diseases, that the very father may not know it, but pass it by as none of his. We can now show nothing but the ruins of our creation, the just argument of our shame before God; but not at all the matter of our plea. We can say indeed, Here stood God's image, these understandings were the candle of the Lord, these hearts were the entertaining rooms of Christ, these bodies were the temple of the Holy Ghost; but alas! what does all this amount to, but a *miserum est felicem fuisse?* Does former holiness excuse present impiety? Because God embraced us in our purity, must he love us in our sins? Is any person in love with a face because it was beautiful heretofore? Now the reasons, I conceive, from whence men frame these kind of objections, may be these two.

1. A self-love, and a proneness to conceive some extraordinary perfection in themselves, which may (as I may so speak) compound for their misdemeanors. Certainly, says the proud heart, God could not be without the service and attendance that he receives from me; he could not well want that revenue of honour that he receives from my prayers and praises. Though I may have slipped and sinned, yet the excellency of my being will outweigh the merit of my sin; not at all considering, why it should not be as easy for God to create a new innocent world, as to preserve an old sinful one. It is natural for every carnal heart, upon the commission of sin, instead of repenting for sin, to look out for some good in itself that may countervail the sin. When it lays its sins in one balance, it will lay its perfections in the other. If it must acknowledge its *magna vitia*, it will take shelter here by opposing *non minores virtutes*. What is spoken of true evangelical love, may in another sense be said of this self-love, that it "covers a multitude of sins." The soul will

never view any of its sinful actions, but through those that are religious; and we may be very confident, that many, by reflecting upon some of their good performances, have even by them been emboldened to sin, thinking that those have set them so far beforehand with God, that the delinquency of a few sins may well be tolerated. Questionless the pharisee could not have devoured widows' houses with so good an appetite, had it not been for his long prayers. And it is as little to be doubted, but that we may ascribe it to the persuasion that many of them have of their piety and regeneration, that they dare give their consciences scope to practise as they do; and by their actions so notoriously to confute their professions. Thus the soul is apt to deck and paint itself, as Jezebel did upon the approach of Jehu; and then presently to imagine that God would fall in love with it. But now, the Spirit of God is nowhere more full, than in the beating down this proud self-esteem: to this intent it expresses the most exact of our services by the vilest of things; in Isaiah lxiv. 6, all our righteousness is compared to "filthy rags;" and in Ezek. xvi. 5, 6, the sinner in his natural condition is presented wallowing and polluted in his blood, to the loathing of his person. And can we think that these are such amiable objects in God's eye? Can filth and pollution afford any thing that may enamour God's affections? If a sinner did but dwell upon the serious meditation of his exceeding vileness by reason of sin, he would never be able to entertain the least thought of meriting acceptance before God.

2. The second reason is our readiness to think that God is not so exceeding jealous of his honour, but he may easily put up the breach of it without the ruin of his creature. Nay, we are even apt to doubt, whether or no our sins make any breach upon it at all. For alas! his honour is above the reach of our sins; his glory is so solid and entire, that as it is not capable of receiving any addition from our choicest services, so neither of suffering any diminution from our vilest impieties; neither our goodness nor our evil does extend to him. If we do well, what is he the better? and if we sin, he is not at all the worse. We know the very heavens have this royal property, to be impassible from any thing that is below.

And moreover, what is this sin? Is it not a mere privation? a nothing? so weak, so low, that we cannot ascribe any active influence or operation to it? And shall such a nothing, such a mere deficiency, be expiated by nought under the eternal ruin of an immortal soul? Is this such a thing, for which God should keep anger for ever? especially since it is that which gives him so fair an opportunity for the glorifying his dearest attribute, his mercy. For the proper formal act of mercy is to pardon and to spare: and if the creature had not sinned, how could God have pardoned? Such reasonings as these the soul is apt to

mutter out against God. Hence it is, that God so often in scripture sets his face against this imagination; he tells us over and over, that he is a jealous God, Exod. xx. 5, xxxiv. 14; and that he will in no wise acquit the guilty, Nahum i. 3. Shall a poor mortal man, the best of whose glory is but a fading flower, I say, shall he stand so upon the punctilios of his credit, as to vindicate the least breach of his reputation with duel and bloodshed? and shall not the great God vindicate his honour with fire and sword against all transgressors? We shall one day see, that it is not so easy a matter to escape God's revenging justice for sin.

But now to clear off these pleas and objections of men, I shall state and answer this question, viz.

Whence it is, that the offence of a child against a parent does not disengage him from acting according to the relation of a father? I speak of ordinary offences; for there are some that do, as it were, even dissolve this relation, as has been already specified in him that cursed his father, that was incorrigible, Deut. xxi. 20. In this case, the hand of the parent was to be first upon him, both in his accusation and execution. But now, for ordinary offences, whence is it that a father ought not upon these to cast off a child? And yet, the least offence against God so far dissolves the relation, as to discharge him from manifesting himself in any further acts of goodness towards the creature; notwithstanding the mercies of God are infinitely, inconceivably greater than the most tender compassions of an earthly father.

In answer to this, to omit this consideration, that a man owes infinitely more to God than to an earthly father, even in respect of those things he received from his father; God gave him his life, the parent only conveyed it. And shall we owe as much to the casket that brought the jewel, as to the friend that sent it? But I say, to pass by this,

(1.) The reason that every ordinary offence does not disentitle a son to the love of his father, as it does the creature to the protection and favour of his Creator, is not from the obliging nature of that relation beyond the other, but from the law and command of God; which, on this side, commands men to exercise a mutual forgiveness of injuries, and so much more obliges the father freely to forgive his son: and, on the other side, the law says, that "the soul that has sinned, it shall die." So that God cannot, upon the same terms, forgive a sinner: there is a word gone out against him.

(2.) Every offence of a child against a parent, though it immediately strikes him, yet it is ultimately resolved not into him, but into God, of whose righteous command and law it is a breach and violation. But every offence against God is ultimately resolved into God, and no other. And, therefore, a father is not so much concerned in an injury offered him by his

son, as God in the offence of the creature; and, consequently, he is not so much provoked by that, to let fall the tenderness of a father, as God to lay aside the affection of a Creator.

(3.) That which hinders an offence from pardon, is the vindicative justice of him against whom the offence is committed. But there is no such thing as vindicative justice in men one towards another, naturally and from themselves; for they are all equal, and this is founded in God's essential sovereignty. All coaction (as Grotius observes), of which punishment is the greatest, being peculiar τῇ ὑπερεχούσῃ ἐξουσίᾳ: and God himself says, "Vengeance is mine." Wherefore there is not the same reason for God to forgive a sinful creature, that there is for one man to forgive another.

I think these considerations sufficiently clear the question. But before I leave this use, I shall add this one thing, which may more fully state the case between God and the sinner; viz.—

When I say the sin of the creature disengages God from showing him any favour, it is not hence to be gathered, that it must therefore engage him to show him none; for this was no less to put a bond of restraint upon God, than if we should admit of a contrary obligation. As for those that say, that God, after the sin of man, is so engaged by the necessity of his nature, that he can with no accord to his justice show him any mercy, till a full satisfaction be paid down; I think they cannot say, that God's giving of Jesus Christ did presuppose any satisfaction given before; which, if so, it may be left to the impartial consideration of any one, whether for God, being so offended by man, yet upon the free spontaneous motion of his own will, to find out, give, and constitute a mediator for him, be not as great or greater mercy, than, when a mediator is given, to accept of a satisfaction from him in man's behalf?

Second use. This may serve to inform us of the cursed provoking nature of sin. Certainly there is something in it more than ordinary, that should make the great and merciful God take a poor creature, and shake it almost into nothing, to rid his hands of it, to disown, and let it fall out of his protection into endless unspeakable woe and misery; that should make a Creator the executioner of his own creature; a loving father the butcher of his own child; that should sour the sweet relation of a Maker into the terrible name of a revengeful destroyer. O let him, that commits sin with pleasure and delight, consider this, and tremble; him that can please himself in his drunkenness, his uncleanness, poor creature! does such a one know what he is now doing? He is now fixing the insupportable wrath of his great Creator against his poor guilty soul. He is now dissolving that bond of love, by which alone his Maker had bound him to himself. Wouldest thou have all the poison and malignity of

thy sin strained into one expression, take it thus, in short: it is able to make thy Creator become thine enemy.

Third use. This may inform us under what notion we are to make our addresses to God; not as a Creator, for so he is noways suitable to our necessities. He is offended and provoked, and we stand as outlaws and rebels to our Maker. Under this notion, no sinner can see God and live. He is, to such a one, a consuming fire, an everlasting burning, nothing but wrath and vengeance. And can we find any comfort in a consuming fire? Is there any refreshment in an everlasting burning? If we cast ourselves upon his mercy, his justice will break forth upon us and devour us. But you will then say, What shall poor sinners do? whither shall they repair? Why there is yet hope: God's wisdom has reconciled his justice to his mercy, and consequently us to himself. And now he represents himself under a more desirable relation, as a reconciled God. And although, under the former relation, he drives us from him; yet, under this, he tenderly invites us to him. He, therefore, that trembles at the name of an offended Creator, yet let him comfort himself in the title of a reconciled Father. Though we have cause to dread the tribunal of his justice, yet let us come confidently to the throne of his mercy: let us come freely, and spread all our wants before him; lay open our complaints, tell him all the distresses and secret anguishes of our burdened consciences. Believe it, we cannot be more ready to tell them, than he is to hear them; nor he to hear them, than to relieve them. Let us anchor our hopes, our trust, our confidence, upon his goodness: for although, as our Creator, he will not save us; yet, as our Redeemer, he will.

And could we now have a greater or a happier instance of his reconcilement to us, than the present solemnity that we are engaging in? in which we have the very arts and inventions of omniscience to endear us to himself. Could we have a more pregnant demonstration of a reconciled God, than a sacrificed Son; nay, than the blood of that Son? and that so mysteriously, and yet so really, conveyed to us? that he does not only invite us to come to him, but to come within him; not only to an embrace, but to a union; and by ineffable and seraphic incorporations for us to be in him, and for him to be in us: not only endearing, but amazing us with his affection; and, at the same time, feeding our necessities, and entertaining our admiration.

Only let us see, that we so come to him, that we do not put him to receive sins as well as sinners. For though Christ is willing to make us part of his body, yet he is not willing to unite himself to ulcers and putrefaction. And, therefore, he that comes hither with a Judas's heart and hypocrisy, will find a

Judas's entertainment: and though he may receive the morsel from Christ's hand, yet he will find that the devil will enter and go along with it. It will be only the nutriment of his sin, and the repast of his corruption. He that comes to this dreadful duty profane, unclean, or intemperate, will go away with quicker dispositions and livelier appetites to those sins. Every corruption shall rise and recover itself, like a giant refreshed with wine. For Christ has given the devil full commission to enter into such swine, and to drive them headlong to their own destruction.

SERMON XXI.

THE REMORSE OCCASIONED BY ENLIGHTENED REASON ON THE REJECTION OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW XIX. 22.

When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

IT is a truth of general acknowledgment, because of universal experience, that there is no misery comparable to that which follows after a near access to happiness; nor any sorrow so quick and pungent, as that which succeeds a preconceived, but disappointed joy. Such a sorrow we have here; for certainly it must be no small matter, that can make a man sorrowful in the midst of great possessions.

We have this young heir driving a bargain with Christ, and that for no less a thing than eternal life; and driving it so near a close, that only one thing was lacking; a thing, though perhaps in itself great, yet, compared to the purchase, small and inconsiderable: in the 14th verse, "Go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Here was as vast a disproportion between the price and the purchase, as there is distance between earth and heaven.

Neither was the proposal unreasonable, because usually practised, even by the most worldly; it being frequent with men to sell an estate in one place, to buy another in a more convenient. So that he was not so much commanded to leave, as to change his possessions. And, therefore, the rejection of this offer was, upon the best terms of reason, inexcusable; both because the purchase was so advantageous, and the person to whom it was offered, so rich.

Now the words here importing the young man's sorrow, upon something enjoined him by Christ; the natural method of proceeding will require, that we reflect upon the command that was the occasion of this sorrow: and we shall find, that it branched itself into these three parts or degrees.

1. The first was this; "Go, sell that thou hast." This was not only the duty itself, but the preparative and introduction to it. For barely to sell his estate, was only to alter, not to diminish it, and (as we usually say) to turn a long estate into a broad.

2. The second branch was, "Give to the poor." It was not

to throw it away, like the morose philosopher: for the duty here urged, was not to impoverish himself, but to benefit others; not so much to cast it from him, as to secure it to him in other hands.

3. The third and last article of the command was, "Come and follow me;" without which, the other two were utterly insignificant: like two propositions that conclude nothing; or like preparing for a journey, without setting forth. It is the taking up of the cross, that makes our following of Christ feasible; but it is our following of Christ, that makes our taking up of the cross acceptable.

We have here seen the command; and we may be sure that Christ, whose precepts never outweigh their motives, would second it with an argument no less ponderous. And therefore, here he enforces it with a reason as commanding as the precept; even the delight and aim of all created beings, perfection. "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast," &c. Which words, being much abused by the papists, may worthily challenge a further explication.

They, to establish their works of superérogation, have invented a distinction between precepts and counsels. A precept they define a command, so obliging to duty, that the omission of it obliges to punishment. But a counsel not so much commands, as recommends some perfection, beyond what is enjoined in the law; for the omission of which a man shall not incur punishment; and for the performance of which, he shall have a more eminent reward: and therefore it is called a counsel of evangelical perfection.

That popery undermines the law, and perverts the gospel, we are not now to learn: but in this it is hard to judge which is greater, the arrogance or the absurdity. The first, in that they pretend to surpass the limits of all legal perfection. The second, in that they assert, that there may be some perfection that is not contained in the law, which is the unalterable rule and standard of all created holiness.

Let them strive, and strain, and stretch the very sinews of their souls to the highest pin of austerity and alms; yet, unless they can prove that this is to love God more than "with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength" (which the very letter of the law exacts), all their evangelical perfection is already drank up, and forestalled in the vast comprehensive verge and latitude of the precept. And, therefore, this distinction of precepts and counsels is illogical and ridiculous, one member of the distinction grasping within itself the other.

Now to these counsels they refer this injunction given to the young man, to "sell all, and give to the poor;" which they further prove, because to the performance of it Christ promises not only heaven, but "treasure in heaven," which imports a more accumulate degree of felicity. But to this

I answer, that the word "treasure in heaven" does not of necessity signify any such superlative degree or pitch of happiness, but simply the thing itself: which appears from this, that the non-performance of this precept not only degrades from a higher degree of glory, but utterly excludes from any entrance into it at all, as in the 24th verse.

But you will say, if this be not a counsel, but a command, to which of the ten is it to be reduced? I answer, to the first, of serving God with all the heart, and with all the strength.

You will reply then, that all stand obliged to sell their estates, inasmuch as the obligation of that command is universal.

I answer, that this precept commands some things absolutely, which oblige all; some things only hypothetically, that is, in case God shall discover it to be his will to be obeyed in such particular instances: and consequently oblige there only, where God shall make such discoveries.

And here we must observe, that there is a vast difference between a new precept and a new instance of obedience; one *esse formale* (which is that that gives unity to the precept) may extend itself to the whole objective latitude of many undiscovered particulars.

The precept commands us, in general, to love God with all our hearts. Christ here requires this young man, to show that love to God in this particular instance of selling his estate: so that, though the command of loving God extend to all, yet the determination and application of it to this matter is particular, and consequently but of a particular obligation.

Having thus cleared our way to the words themselves, we may observe in them these four things considerable.

1. The person making the address to Christ, who was one whose reason was enlightened to a solicitous consideration of his estate in another world.

2. The thing sought for in this address, viz. eternal life.

3. The condition upon which it was proposed, and upon which refused; namely, the sale and relinquishment of his temporal estate.

4. His behaviour upon this refusal: "He departed sorrowful."

Having thus, as it were, analyzed the text into its several distinct parts, I shall here resume and join them together in this one proposition, viz.

He that deliberately parts with Christ, though for the greatest and most suitable worldly enjoyment, if but his natural reason is awakened, does it with much secret sting and remorse.

In the prosecution of this, I shall do these two things:

I. I shall show whence it is, that a man, acted by an enlightened reason, finds such reluctancy and regret upon his rejection of Christ.

II. I shall show the causes why, notwithstanding this regret

that the conscience feels upon its rejection of Christ, it is yet brought in the issue to reject him.

I. For the first of these; *that an enlightened reason is affected with such remorse, upon its rejection of Christ:* it may proceed from these causes.

1. The first may be taken from the nature of conscience, that is apt to recoil upon any error, either in our actions or our choice.

There are some innate principles of *turpe* and *honestum;* the standing causes of all religion, that supervise all our actions: and according to their agreement to, or deviation from these principles, there follows in the soul a complacency or regret. And the verdict of these is so infallible, that a man may know the good or evil of his actions, by the temper of his mind after their performance. After a good action, though never so difficult, so grim, and unpleasant in the onset, yet what a lightsome refreshing complacency does it leave upon the mind! what a fragrancy, what a cheerfulness upon the spirits! So, on the contrary, an action morally evil and irregular, though recommended with the greatest blandishment and sweetness of allurement to the appetite, yet how empty, and false, and hollow is it found upon the commission! What a sad damp is there upon the heart! what a confusion and displeasedness covers the whole soul!

A man no sooner displeases God, but he presently displeases himself; according to that excellent and divine saying of the Satirist, *Prima est hæc ultio, quod se judice nemo nocens absolvitur.* Hence the expression of *forum conscientiæ* is not a metaphor, but a truth; for there is a severe inquest, an undeniable evidence, an unanswerable charge, and a sudden and a dreadful sentence given by conscience.

No sooner is the action past, but conscience makes the report. As soon as David cut off a piece of Saul's robe, how quickly did his heart smite him! An impure heart, like a foul gun, never vents itself in any sinful commissions, but it recoils.

It is impossible to sequester and divide sin from sorrow. That which defiles, will as certainly disturb the soul. As when mud and filth is cast into a pure fountain, it is not so much said to pollute, as to trouble the waters.

Things good and reasonable have a right to our choice, and a claim to our obedience. There is that overawing majesty, that commanding regency in piety to the conscience, that there is in truth to the intellect. Conscience will not be defied. No stifling the first notions of good and evil, the necessary and eternal dictates of reason.

And this is one cause of the remorse that a sinner feels upon his rejection of Christ. And do you think that this young man had not the experience of this? Did not his conscience vex and

quarrel with him for his sinful and absurd choice? As soon as ever he turned his back, these thoughts dogged him at the heels. He departed indeed, but it was sorrowful, his conscience ringing him many sad peals within, hitting him in the teeth with the murder of his soul; that he had foolishly and irrationally bartered away eternity for a trifle, and lost a never-returning opportunity: an opportunity, in its improvement unvaluable, and in its refusal irrecoverable.

2. The second cause of this trouble and reluctancy, that men find in the very instant of their rejecting Christ, is taken from the usual course of God's judicial proceeding in this matter; which is to clarify the eye of reason to a clearer sight of the beauties and excellencies of Christ, in the very moment and critical instant of his departure. This is, as it were, a lightening before death, a short opening of the understanding before he shuts it for ever.

For when the affections have resolved upon a refusal of Christ, it is but just with God to tantalize and vex the understanding with a livelier discovery of a forsaken advantage.

And here undoubtedly, God has many ways of working upon the understanding, even beyond the understanding; and can affect it with a sudden instantaneous view of a good, which he no sooner discovers, than withdraws: which though it enlightens, and, as it were, gilds the apprehension, yet it changes not the will.

It is like a sudden lightning, that flashes in the face, but alters not the complexion: it is rather vision than persuasion. God here represents the beauties of the kingdom of heaven to the sinner, as Satan did the beauty and glory of this world to Christ, by a sudden, transient representation; which, we know, did rather amuse than persuade him: it struck his apprehension, but never changed his resolution.

And that this dealing of God should effect no more upon the mind, is suitable to its proper design and purpose; it being intended by God, not to inform, but to afflict the reason: that since it refused a full draught of the waters of life, it might, before the final loss of them, have its memory quickened with a taste.

Now this clearer transient discovery of Christ made to the sinner, in the instant of his rejecting him, is another cause that whets the sting, that enhances the vexation, and sends him away sorrowful; for the clearer the apprehension of a good, the quicker is the sense of its loss.

3. The third and last cause of the anxiety that a sinner feels upon his relinquishment of Christ, if his reason be enlightened, is because there is that in Christ, and in the gospel, even as they stand in opposition to the best of such enjoyments, that answers the most natural and generous discourses of reason.

For the proof of which, I shall produce two known principles of reason, into which the most severe, harsh, and mortifying

commands of the gospel, are by clear and genuine consequence resolved.

(1.) The first is, that the greatest calamity is to be endured, rather than the least sin to be committed. That this principle grows upon the stock of bare natural reason, may be demonstrated by the united testimony of those who had no other light but that of reason; all sealing to the truth of this, that the evil of sin is greater than the evil of pain or affliction.

So that it grew into a standing maxim in their philosophy, that no wicked man was happy. But he that is wicked may be rich, learned, beautiful, victorious; he may engross all the perfections, and the very quintessence of nature. It is clear therefore, that their reason told them, that these were not happiness; since, notwithstanding these, a man might be wicked, and consequently, upon their own principle, not happy.

Hence Cicero reports, that Socrates would often curse him that first made that triple division of good, into *an honest, a pleasing, and profitable;* as accounting the pleasing and the profitable, so far as it cut off from honesty, to lose the very nature of good. But now to state a species so, that it should carry in it a negation of, or a contrariety to its genus, is certainly, upon all principles of logic, absurd and preposterous.

The happiness of every thing is to act suitably to its nature; and reason tells us, that those actions most perfect nature, that perfect the best part of it, the soul. All external miseries and enjoyments cannot reach this, but the morality of our actions does. Every sin, every moral irregularity, does as really imprint an indelible stain upon the soul, as a blot falling upon the cleanest paper.

The Satirist calls virtue the end and design of living, the *vivendi causam;* and to save one's life with the loss of one's innocence, is to purchase the means with the loss of the end.

Cicero, in the first of his Offices, peremptorily asserts, that nothing can be stated rightly in that subject, but by those *qui honestatem propter se dicunt expetendam.* Seneca is full of the like assertions. And however they might live below what they spoke, and their practice contradict their principles, yet their principles discovered their reason.

Having thus proved, that natural reason suggests the choice of the greatest misery before the least sin; as being a thing in itself irregular, and therefore irrational, and consequently contrary to nature: it follows, that we are equally to choose it, rather than to engage in that which, by certain and native consequence, will occasion sin. For the same reason will prove, that whatsoever is done or suffered against sin itself, holds as well against the immediate causes of sin.

If reason tells me, that it is more misery to be covetous than to be poor, as our language, by a peculiar significance of dialect, calls the covetous man the miserable man; and if I find that,

retaining my wealth, I cannot avoid covetousness; the same reason that tells me I must avoid the sin, will convince me also, that I am to wash my hands of the temptation. And had the philosopher thrown his wealth into the sea upon this motive, it was more custom than reason, that vouched his action ridiculous: it being only a throwing overboard his riches, to keep his conscience from shipwreck.

The reason which tells one in honour, it is better to be despised than to be proud, if with his honours he cannot but be proud, if the popular air will get in, and taint all; why, the same reason will command him to lay them down, and rationally to trample upon them: for if we dread being caught, it is absurd walking upon the snare.

Now, what did Christ enjoin in this seemingly severe command to the young man, that a natural reason, acting naturally, might not upon this principle have enforced? For doubtless, he saw him so riveted into a confidence and love of his possessions, and perhaps foresaw what he neither did nor could, that they would certainly occasion luxury, epicurism, with all its impure consequences; and that therefore there was no remedy by plastering, but by cutting off the sore; nor by allowing him the use of his possessions, when he saw something in his temper, or the circumstances of his life, that would unavoidably necessitate their abuse.

And without question, the young man who, from Christ's miracles and life, could not but collect his intimate acquaintance with the mind of God, could not but collect also, that he would propose no command, but of which he knew an excellent reason. No wonder, therefore, if he rejected it with reluctancy; and if this rejection, being contrary to reason, was troublesome: for trouble is, when the object grates upon the faculty, either by its disproportion or contrariety.

And thus much for the first principle of reason, upon which the severest commands of the gospel do proceed.

(2.) A second principle is this, That a less good is to be forsaken for a greater: an aphorism attested to by the natural, untaught, universal judgment of reason. And this is so clear, that those who observe how the will is drawn by its object, find that, in choice, a less good, compared to a greater, is rejected, not formally as a less good, but as absolutely bad.

Hence all deliberation in choice is caused by our apprehension of an equality of goodness in two things proposed; and as the disproportion grows clearer and clearer, a man begins less to deliberate, and more to determine. But where this disparity of less and greater is evident, there deliberation has no place, but determination is immediate. And this is the reason of the thing from philosophy.

Add weight to one scale, and the balance will no longer be indifferent which way to incline. Did ever any man in his wits

prefer brass before gold, a pebble before a pearl? The same inclination that desires good, does as naturally desire the best. He that deliberates and doubts, whether ten pounds be better than five, may as well question whether it be more than five. Do you think, when Samuel told Saul of the kingdom, that he was any longer troubled for the asses? or that when David had received the sceptre, he was solicitous about his shepherd's crook?

Suspense in the choice is from indifference in the object, when both parts are equally attractive: like a needle between two loadstones, it inclines to both, but it adheres to neither; but lay it between a loadstone and a flint, and you shall quickly see to which it clings.

Now to reduce this principle to the case in hand, we are to demonstrate two things.

1st. That the good promised by our Saviour to the young man, was really greater than that which was to be forsaken for it. The greatest, the severest, and most unpracticable duty of Christianity, is enforced upon this very principle of reason: as in Matt. v. the cutting off the right hand, and the plucking out the right eye, is not urged upon the bare obligation of duty, but upon this dictate of reason, that it is really better. In the 29th and 30th verses, "It is better" (*συμφέρει γάρ*, it is profitable for thee) "to go blind and maimed to heaven, than having both eyes and both hands to be thrown into hell." It is an evangelical conclusion, drawn from a natural medium of self-preservation.

For what person of sobriety and recollection would not crucify his sin rather than damn his soul? and endure the severity, and live under the discipline of a mortifying precept, than fry eternally under the flame and fire of a condemning sentence?

There is no proportion between the miseries or the felicities of this life, with those that are exhibited to us by Christ in the gospel; and where the disparity of things is so great, as to meet our first apprehensions, there to make parallels is superfluous, and to produce proofs rather supposes the case doubtful, than makes it at all clearer.

Christ opposed eternal life to the young man's possessions; and what compare is there between these upon terms of bare reason? between the narrow compass of a few moments, and the vast spaces of eternity? between the froth and levity of these comforts, and between an exceeding weight of glory, between durable, solid, massy happiness?

What equality between the life of a traveller, and the reign of a prince? between the transient titillations of a bewitched sickly appetite, and those ineffable pleasures that stream eternally from the beatific vision?

Reason can say nothing for one before the other, unless perhaps it may reply, that a present good is rationally to be preferred before a future. But to this I answer, that a good is not barely to

be measured by its immediate presentiality; but by its adequate co-existence to the soul, whose duration, being immortal, reaches more to the future, than it possesses of the present. And this we have to say of the greatest temporal happiness, that though it is present, yet it will quickly be past; and of that which is eternal, that though it be now future, yet it will once be always present; and so even upon this score also it is to be preferred.

We see, therefore, that natural light joins in with divine revelation, acknowledging the goods of a future estate, incomparably more desirable than any in this. So that when Christ gave this command, reason echoed back the same; and together with the voice redoubled the obligation.

2dly. The second thing to be demonstrated is, that the good promised by our Saviour, was not only greater in itself, but also proposed as such with sufficient clearness of evidence, and upon sure undeniable grounds. For though a thing be really better in itself, yet if it does not appear to be so, no man can be blamed for not embracing it. Now it being proved above, that the eternal life promised by Christ did by infinite degrees of difference exceed the young man's revenues; the only thing remaining was, whether he promised it upon such grounds, that in reason he ought to have believed him.

Here, to omit other grounds and arguments, the truth of the gospel seems chiefly to be proved upon these two grounds: 1. The exact fulfilling of prophecies in the person of Christ. 2. His miraculous actions.

1. For the first of these, it cannot be denied, but that it affords a solid proof to those that will be convinced; but not so convincing to a sceptical disputer, or to an obstinate Jew. Forasmuch as those prophecies make the kingdom of the Messias, as it is represented in the letter of the scripture, far different from what it fell out to be in the person of Christ; so that we cannot apply them to him, but by a mystical, anagogical explication: the liberty of which they may choose whether or no they will grant us; and if they should deny it, perhaps we could not so easily disprove them.

2. But, secondly, for his miracles: the convincing strength of these was upon all grounds of reason undeniable; and that upon these two most confessed principles.

(1.) That they did exceed any natural created power, and therefore were the immediate effects of a divine.

(2.) That God cannot attest, or by his power bear witness to a lie.

Now, when Christ avouched to the world such precepts, promises, and threatenings, for truths; and, to prove his words, cured the lame and the blind, raised the dead, stilled the winds and the seas with a word, fed four thousand with three or four loaves; and all this before his enemies, who spitefully, and there-

fore thoroughly sifted all his actions, and yet confessed the miracle: if, I say, Christ did these miracles to confirm his doctrine; either God must have employed his divine power to ratify and confirm a falsity, or the doctrine so confirmed must needs be a truth. This to me seems so pregnant, so full of convincing evidence, that it leaves the unbeliever inexcusable.

Undoubtedly Christ knew his own strongest argument, when he still remits his subtlest and most inquisitive enemies to his miracles; as in John v. 36, "My works bear witness of me;" and in John xiv. 11, "Believe me for the works' sake." And I think I may truly avouch, that if the grounds upon which the gospel is proposed to our belief, were not sufficient to convince our reason, no man would stand bound to believe it.

Questionless in this very instance, the young man's reason, upon this severe and startling command of Christ, could not but discourse the case in this manner:

"He positively tells me, that if I would obtain eternal life, I must sell my estate, and give it all to the poor. Is this true, or is it not? If not, and if he only deludes me, how could he back his words with such works, as apparently carry in them the finger of God? For God does not hear sinners, he cannot lend the use of his power to a sycophant, to a deceiver; therefore certainly, as what he does cannot but be the works of God, so what he says cannot but be the mind of God; and consequently eternal life, which he promises, will be a thing of certain event: and since I cannot have it otherwise, but by relinquishing my temporal estate, relinquish it I must, or never obtain it."

Here observe, that his reason having convinced itself, beyond all evasion, of the truth of Christ's words, and consequently of the necessity of his own obedience; his will not being able to comply with that command as good and convenient, which his reason did enforce as true and necessary, he departed sorrowful; there was a tumult in his soul, his judgment and his will were together by the ears: and hereupon he was full of secret trouble and horror, upon the terrifying, irksome, lashing presages of a miserable eternity.

And thus much for the first general head, viz. to show whence it is that an enlightened reason finds such regret in its rejection of Christ.

But now it may be naturally inquired, that if there is so much trouble and reluctancy upon an awakened reason, when it breaks and parts with Christ; whence comes it to pass that they break and part at all? If they cannot bid farewell but with tears in their eyes, what necessity is there, but that they may forbear parting, and so prevent the sorrow?

And this introduces me to the second general head proposed to be insisted on, which is,

II. To show *the causes, that, notwithstanding all this remorse of conscience, the soul is yet brought in the issue to reject, and shake hands with Christ.*

1. The first cause is from this, that the perceptions of sense overbear the discourses of reason. Reason discoursing upon grounds of religion, builds only upon another world; but sense fixes upon this. And since religion borrows much from reason, and reason itself has all conveyed to it by sense, it is no wonder if all knowledge and desire resolves into sense, as its first foundation.

And here it is unfortunately verified, that the elder must serve the younger; that understanding must veil to sense; that the eye must do obeisance to the window, and discourse submit to sensation.

Yet thus it is, sense rebels against reason, and like those captains among the Israelites, it slays its master, and reigns in his stead. Though reason would argue the soul into obedience, by mediums grounded upon divine revelation; yet sense more forcibly persuades to sin, upon the undeniable experiment of the sweetness of worldly objects: which indeed prevail not because they are more convincing, but because more suitable; not that they satisfy our judgment, but that they close with our condition.

And herein properly consists the difficulty of believing; that we must part with a good which we see, taste, and enjoy, for a good that is invisible, and of which there is no idea conveyed to the apprehension; which therefore comes recommended to our desires at a great disadvantage.

The happiness of heaven, for which we are to forego all, is said to be the vision of God, which we find hardly desirable, because not intelligible. For we cannot imagine, and frame in our minds, what it is to see God, since he never was nor can be seen by our senses.

The young man desired eternal life; but he had no notion of the pleasure of it, what kind of thing it was: but he knew and found the sweetness of an estate, so that the sensible impressions of this quickly overcame and swallowed up the weak and languid conceptions that he had of the other.

In short, the very condition of our nature stakes us down, both to the judgment and the inclination of sense: for as there is nothing to any purpose in the understanding, but what was first in the sense; so there is scarce any thing in the will, but what has first passed the appetite.

And this is the reason, that men, though convinced of the excellency of Christ, yet rather choose the world, of which they have such strong, lively, and warm apprehensions. Sense and appetite outvote reason, in which thing alone is summed up the misery of our nature, and the very cause that so few are saved. For what man almost is there in the world, who, upon due obser-

vation of his actions, does not find that his appetite oftener foils his judgment, than his judgment overrules his appetite?

2. The second cause or reason of this final rejection of Christ, is from the prevailing opposition of some corrupt affection: which being predominant in the soul, commands the will, and blears the eye of the judgment; showing it all things in its own colour, by a false and partial representation. It is through the tyranny of these affections, that when the will goes one way, the practice is forced another.

Come to the sensual and voluptuous person, and convince him that there is a necessity of his bidding farewell to all inordinate pleasure, in order to his future happiness: perhaps you gain his reason, and in some measure insinuate into his will; but then his sensual desire interposes, and outvotes and unravels all his convictions. As when by much ado a vessel is forced and rowed some pretty way contrary to the tide, presently a gust of wind comes, and beats it further back than it was before.

Come to a covetous worldly man, and convince him, that Christ invites him, and he must come; yet covetousness will stand forth and tell you that he has bought a farm or a yoke of oxen, and they draw him another way, and he cannot come. And the truth is, it is impossible that he should, till his corruption is subdued, and the bias of his affections turned.

If Christ ever wins the fort of the soul, the conquest must begin here: for the understanding and will seem to be like a castle or fortified place; there is strength indeed in them, but the affections are the soldiers who manage those holds, the opposition is from these: and if the soldiers surrender, the place itself, though never so strong, cannot resist.

And this probably was the case of this young man; had his affections been true to his reason, had he not been worldly as well as rich, Christ and he had never parted for a piece of land, that is, for such a compass of dirt. But the ruling corruption of his mind, the peculiar minion of his affections, was worldliness; and to tell this temper of mind of selling all, that he might be happy, it would have been to that as absurd and ridiculously incredible, as if he had bid him sell and give away all, that he might be rich.

This therefore is the second cause, that though reason and judgment would veil to Christ, yet the man does not, because his affections lord it. It is indeed natural for a man to have the dominion over the acts of his will: but he is in this thing like the centurion, though he has some under him, and bids such a one go, and he goes, yet he is also a man under authority himself; though he commands his will, yet he is commanded by his affections.

And perhaps this may be one reason, not contemptible, of the different judgments of men concerning the freedom or servitude

of the will; that they are not so much determined by arguments from without, as by experience from within; that some have strong natural passions and affections, others but weak and moderate: the former of which, finding their will so potently swayed by such passions, think it is not free, and cannot but do what it does; others, finding their affections to have so small an ascendant over their will, by reason of this their natural weakness, are apt to think that they have free will, and a perfect indifference to all actions, to accept or to refuse whatsoever is proposed to them. This doubtless may be one great cause of men's disagreement in this point.

In sum, the economy of the soul in this case is like a public council sitting under an armed force; let them consult and vote what they will, yet they must act as the army and the tumult will have them. In this sense every soldier is a commander. In like manner, let both the judgment and the will be for Christ, yet the tumult of the affections will carry it; and when they cannot out-reason the conscience, they will out-cry it.

3. The third cause, inducing men to relinquish Christ contrary to the judgment of their conscience, is the force and tyranny of the custom of the world. It is natural for all men to live more by example than precept; and it is the most efficacious enforcement of duty, to clothe it in a precedent. As a physician by his receipts, persuasions, and discourses cannot win a froward patient to take a bitter potion; but by drinking of it himself, he presently overcomes and shames him into an imitation.

It is the world, and the fashion of it, that ruins souls. It is the shame of men and the vogue of the times, that frights men out of their consciences: and could we see the secret movings and reasonings of men's hearts, when Christ by the convictions of his Spirit debates the case between himself and the soul, we should see the non-conversion of most men chargeable upon this very cause, and that they miss of salvation upon no other account in the world, than that it is the fashion to be damned.

Christ easily runs down the swearer, the drunkard, and the epicure, and convinces them of the wretched destructive consequences of their riots; but then, this whispers them another lesson: What would the world say of me, should I renounce my garb and jollity, and sneak into a course of severe and religious living? How would my companions despise and post me for a base pusillanimous spirit, as void of the generosity and air of courtship, and a stranger to the genius of true nobility!

And this temptation is so much the stronger, because it is founded upon the most unyielding corruption of our nature, which is pride; a quality which will put a man upon doing any thing to keep up the post of his station and reputation in the world: hereupon, if it comes to a justle and competition, gentility must go before Christianity, and fashion take the wall of religion.

It was this that made the Jews suppress their convictions, John xii. 42, 43: many believed in Christ, but they did not profess him openly, because they feared being put out of the synagogue; for, it is added, "they loved the praise of men." This sent Nicodemus to Christ by night; the struggles of his conscience between conviction and shame, made him, upon the former of these, venture to do what the latter of these would not let him own.

And amongst other dissuasives from following of Christ, the young man could not but be assaulted with such as these: What! part with all for a new notion of another world? sell land to buy hope, be preached out of my estate, and worded out of such fair farms and rich possessions? And all this to follow a despised person, hungry and naked, and perhaps come at length to beg an alms at my own door? to be the talk of every table, to be scorned of my enemies, and not pitied by my friends; to be counted a fool, an idiot, and fit to be begged, did I not beg myself? No, I cannot bear it: this is intolerable.

Now observe, here was the eye of the needle that could not be passed; here Christ and he broke; the power of custom and the quick apprehensions of shame staved him off from salvation. He would do like the world, though he perished with it; swim with the stream, though he was drowned in it; rather go sociably to hell, than in the uncomfortable solitude of precise singularity to heaven; the jollity of the company made him overlook the broadness and danger of the way.

Precedency is not only alluring but authentic: for can a man have any greater warrant for the reasonableness of an action, than the practice of the universe? But certainly, there will be a time one day, when a man shall curse himself for not having had the courage to outbrave and trample upon the common apprehensions and censures of the world, when Christ and that stood rivals for his soul; and for having been so stupidly a coward, as to be baffled of his salvation by words and opinion.

Now the inferences and deductions from the words thus discussed, are these:

1. We gather hence the great criterion and art of trying our sincerity; which is, by the test of such precepts as directly reach our peculiar corruptions. Observe the excellent method that Christ took to convince this person. Had he tried him by a precept of temperance, chastity, or just dealing, he had never sounded the bottom of his heart: for the civility of his life would have afforded a fair and satisfying reply to all these: but when he came close to him, and touched upon his heart-string, his beloved possessions, the man quickly shows himself, and discovers the temper of his spirit more by the love of one particular endeared sin, than by his forbearance of twenty, to which he stood indifferent.

Every man's sincerity is not to be tried the same way. He that should conclude a man pious, because not covetous, would bring but a short argument; for perhaps he may be lustful or ambitious, and the stream be altogether as strong and violent, though it runs in a different channel.

The reason of this assertion is, because no man bears an equal propensity to all sins. There is not only a contrariety between vice and virtue, but also between one vice and another. Nay, perhaps, the distance between the two latter is far the greater; forasmuch as there is a longer passage from extreme to extreme, than from an extreme to the middle, which we know is the situation of virtue. No wonder, therefore, since a man's corrupt appetite bears not an equal inclination to all sins, that it is not equally to be tried by all precepts. Things peculiar and specific are those that must distinguish and discover.

Now, as in a tree, it is the same sap and juice that spreads itself into all that variety of branches; some straight, some crooked, some of this figure, some of that: so it is the same stock and furniture of natural corruption, that shoots forth into that great diversity of vices, that exert such different operations in different tempers. And as it is the grand office of judgment to separate and distinguish, and so to proportion its applications; so herein is the great spiritual art of a prudent ministry, first to learn a man's proper distemper, and then to encounter it by a peculiar and suitable address. Reprehensions that are promiscuous are always ineffectual.

But much more ineffectual, if not also absurd, is a reprehension misplaced. He that should preach damnation to prodigality and intemperance before a company of usurers, what did he else but administer indirectly an occasion to them, to measure their piety by their distance from that vice; while, in the mean time, they stood chargeable with a worse. A man may, with as much propriety, and success of action, angle for birds, or lay lime-twigs to catch fish, as think to convince a man of the sin of prodigality, by loud and sharp declamations against covetousness.

Both, indeed, are sins; but their particular quality makes their agreement, in the general nature of sin, scarce considerable. Was a minister to deal with a luxurious debauched congregation, how toothless and insipid would it be to make harangues against faction! a sin wholly of another nature, and dwelling in another disposition.

When Paul preached before Felix, he might have directed his sermon against idolatry and superstition, against heresy, or against rebellion; but he chose rather to discourse of "justice, temperance, and of judgment to come." Why? but because he determined his subject by the temper of his auditor, whose injustice in taking bribes, and whose lust in keeping another man's wife, made him fit to be charged home with a severe and searching discourse of

the contrary virtues? which, we know, so struck his conscience, like lightning, both for its force and insinuation, that it sent him away trembling: as Christ before him, by the like methods of discourse, sent this young man away sorrowful.

Now it concerns every man to get the best assurance he can of his sincerity; to attain which, he must follow the method that Christ used towards this young candidate for eternal life. He must arraign his corruption before that precept, that particularly strikes at it; otherwise he will find, that he puts a fallacy upon his conscience, if he misapplies the rule; and if his sin being theft, he tries himself by a law made against murder.

2. The issue of the whole action, in the young man's not closing with Christ's proposals about eternal life, and his sorrowful departure thereupon, lays before us a full account of that misery which attends a final dereliction of Christ. Now the happiness that man is capable of, being twofold, temporal and eternal, and misery being properly a privation of happiness, the greatness of this misery consists in this, that it adequately deprives a man of both these.

(1.) Of that which is eternal. I mention this first, because it is the greatest and the best. Unbelief eternizes nothing but our miseries. The terms are short and absolute. No leaving possessions, no eternal life; no casting away our goods, no escaping the shipwreck. Our dearest corruptions are to be mortified, our fairest enjoyments relinquished; this world to be left, or no admission into a better. Yet though the proposal be so evident, and the arguments enforcing it so strong and rational; men, for all this, will not be brought to bend under the power and necessity of this truth: but the heart is still apt to relieve itself with a secret persuasion, that Christ and possessions, future happiness and present ease, are consistent; and that all assertions to the contrary are but the brain-sick notions of melancholy spirits, that would impose unnecessary penance upon the world; and therefore they must have their pleasures, their humours, their profits, and their garb, and that in the most eager and slavish pursuit of them; though truth itself has expressly said, that we cannot serve God and mammon. And I am sure, that if they cannot be served, they cannot be so enjoyed together.

But certainly we shall one day find, that the strait gate is too narrow for any man to come bustling in, thracked with great possessions, and greater corruptions. These are interests that can never be joined. Continual pleasure here and hereafter are incompatible; heaven and earth are at too great a distance to be united. And, if so, then we see where our unbelief leaves us, even in the regions of horror and despair, in that place of torment and separation from God; where, who knows but this unhappy young heir, with the other rich ones of the world, is now weeping and wailing over his present estate, cursing and crying out of his soul-ruining possessions.

The sorrow he felt before, was only an earnest of this damnation, a taste and prelibation of future wrath. If men would but consider that sad retinue of consequences which attends the final resolutions of infidelity, the happiness it bereaves of, and the misery that it infallibly condemns to; surely they would not stand and condition with Christ, before they surrendered their pleasures, honours, and possessions; but they would throw them up, and count it not a loss, but an escape. But unbelief will never be counted unseasonable, till it has made the unbeliever perfectly miserable.

(2.) But, secondly, it bereaves even of temporal happiness also; even that which it promises, and which only it designs, and for the retaining of which it brings a man to part with his hopes of that which is future and eternal. That it does so, is evident; for what delight, what taste or relish is there in the greatest affluence of all a man's worldly possessions, when a grim offended conscience shall stand by him, and protest against all his pleasures? And however men may put the best face upon things, yet certainly there is no such pain or torment as an aching, angry conscience, under a merry aspect.

When a man shall look upon his rich farms and fair houses, and his conscience in the mean time whisper him, that this is all that he must expect for ever: when he shall eat and drink the price of his soul, and pay down eternity for every morsel; so that he never sits down to his full table, but, like Esau, he sees his birth-right served up to him in a mess: when, by whatsoever he looks upon, whatsoever he wears, upon whatsoever he treads, the remembrance of the sad price is still revived upon his conscience: this takes away the heart and life of the comfort; and the mirth of the feast is checked by the consideration of the reckoning.

Now this certainly is the sum of all miseries; and since we can go no further, we may conclude, that unbelief is entertained upon very hard terms, when it robs the unbeliever of his last modicum; even of that little slender remain of happiness, that he promised himself in this world; and not only condemns him to die, but also, as it were, feeds him with bread and water till his execution; and so leaves him wretched and destitute, even in that place where the wicked themselves have an inheritance.

Now to him who is able to make us wise in our choice here, and happy in our enjoyment hereafter, the great consequent of a wise choice here; even to him be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

THE DUTY OF PATIENCE UNDER INJURIES.

1 Peter ii. 23.

Who, being reviled, reviled not again.

If we run over the whole train and catalogue of duties that are incumbent upon a Christian, we shall find that they are fully comprised under these two heads; his active and his passive obedience. Concerning which, it may be doubted whether of the two, as to the worth and value of the thing itself, ought to have the preeminence. For though all duties expressly enjoined, are by virtue of such injunction equally necessary, yet it follows not that they are in themselves equally excellent. If we here measure the greatness of the virtue by the difficulty of its exercise, passive obedience will certainly gain the precedency: for that this is the most difficult, appears undeniably from this reason, that there is much in human nature that inclines a man to action, so that without it there would be no enjoyment; but on the contrary, there is no proneness or inclination in nature to suffer, but a great abhorrence and aversion from it. So that every instance of voluntary passive obedience must commence entirely upon a dereliction of our own will, and a compliance with a superior.

The Spirit of God in this portion of scripture reads us a lecture of patience from the living command of Christ's example; who by enduring the wrath of his Father, and the affronts and contumelies of men, made it evident to the world, that he was able not only to do, but also to suffer miracles. He that never provoked God's justice, could yet submit himself to the stroke of his anger: and he that never dispensed any thing but blessings amongst men, could yet endure cursings and revilings from them.

Before I enter upon the words, it may be questioned, whether or no this particular instance of Christ's patience may be a sufficient ground for our general imitation. For as in matters of argument we cannot from a particular infer a universal conclusion; so there seems to be the same reason in matters of action, that the particular example of one, should not oblige the practice of all.

But to this it may be answered, that divines usually reduce all Christ's actions to these three sorts.

1. His miraculous actions, such as issued from his divine

nature. As his raising the dead, stilling the sea and the winds with a word, and feeding thousands with a few loaves. In all these, it is our duty to admire, not to imitate him; for by these he shows us not what we were to do after him, but only what we were to believe concerning him.

2. The second sort were his mediatorial actions; such as concerned his offices, to which he was advanced as mediator. As his governing and disposing of all the world for the good of his church; his dispensing of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, which are acts of his kingly office; his satisfying for sin, and his continual intercession, which are acts of his priestly function. And lastly, his teaching of the saints, outwardly by his word, and inwardly by his Spirit: which he did as the great prophet, sanctified, and sent into the world for that purpose. In all these, it is no more our duty to do as Christ did, than to be what Christ was.

3. The third and last sort were his moral actions, which he both did himself, and also commanded others to do. Such were his praying, his giving alms, and his gentle behaviour to all men: and to these we are all equally engaged. And the reason is, because Christ performed all these duties, under that relation in which we all stand obliged, as well as Christ. He performed them as a man, as a rational creature subject to the law of his Creator: and so we are all. Now under this rank comes his patient endurance of the injurious behaviour of men. And in this respect every Christian should be not only a disciple to his doctrine, but a representative of his person; he should transcribe him in his practice, and make his life a comment and illustration upon his master's.

Having thus answered this query, let us now enter upon the words themselves; the scope and design of which, is to recommend to us one excellent branch of the great evangelical virtue of patience: the entire exercise of which adequately lies in these two things: first, in our behaviour towards God; secondly, in our converse with men.

And this is that which is now to be discoursed of: that composedness of mind, that temper of spirit, that displays itself in a quiet undisturbed endurance of scoffs, slanders, and all the lashes of contumelious tongues. For though the words speak negatively, yet this is a known rule in divinity, that there is no command, that runs in the strain of negatives, but couches under it a positive duty.

Having thus shown the design and purport of the words, I shall endeavour to give a full account of it, in the ensuing discussion of these three particulars.

I. I shall show what is implied in the extent of this duty, of "not reviling again."

II. I shall show how the observation of this duty comes to be so exceeding difficult.

III. I shall show by what means a man may work himself to such a composure and temper of spirit, as to be able to observe this so difficult a duty. Of each of which in their order. And,

I. For the first of these: *What is implied in the duty here expressed to us, by "not reviling again."* We must here observe, that as every outward sinful action is but the consummation of a sin long before conceived in the thoughts, fashioned in the desires, and then ripened in the affections: from whence it comes to birth, by issuing forth in actual commission; so there is no way to secure the soul from the danger of the commission, but by dashing it in the places of its conception and antecedent preparation; and so to keep it from seeing the world, by stifling it in the womb.

Accordingly this command implies two things.

1st. The not entertaining the impression of injuries with acrimony of thought and internal resentment.

2dly. The not venting any such resentment in virulent vindictive language.

Or briefly thus:

1. A suppressing of our inward disgusts.
2. A restraint of our outward expressions.

1. Concerning the first of which; no sooner does the foul tongue give us the alarm, but straight all the powers of the mind are awakened, the concerns of reputation begin to rise, thoughts of defiance to take up arms, and the whole soul boils within itself, grows big with the injury, and would fain discharge and disburden itself in a full revenge.

This is the posture of the mind in this case; and it will quickly proclaim itself by loquacity of countenance and a significance of gesture: and though the tongue perhaps should forbear, yet a man will speak his mind with his very face, he will look satires, and rail with every glance of his eye.

If the mind be full and embittered, it will assuredly have its vent, and, like unsettled liquors, work over into froth and foulness. But admit that it refrains, yet still the man shall find a civil war within himself, a great scuffle and disturbance, his thoughts divided between contrary principles, the clashings of prudence and revenge.

But now all these must be composed; for God hears the language of the heart, the outcry and tumult of the affections, the slander of the thoughts, and the invectives of the desires. And that man that can entertain the anger that he dares not utter, and hug the distastes that he will not speak; so that, in that respect, his heart is never at his mouth: he may, indeed, have more prudence, but never the less malice; or his malice may be buried, but not dead.

For suppose that his concealed wrath never flies out in words,

yet the virulence and ugliness of the mind, the anarchy and confusion of the passions, is still the same. It is like thunder without a shower. The inward chafings and ravings of the heart make it a very unfit seat for reason or religion. Christ and religion are usually asleep in such a storm, and do not actually exert themselves in such a soul.

Wrath is wrath, and has all the deformities of that passion, whether it frets in a concealed disgust, or speaks out in open slander and calumny. As a body is altogether as unsound while it festers by an inward putrefaction, as when it casts abroad its rottenness by flux and suppuration.

2. There is required a restraint of the outward expressions. We must hush our discontents, put our mouths in the dust, and there bury our passion.

I confess, when anger and the tongue, that is, the two unruliest things in the world, and both so impatient of control, do meet and concur, the restraint must needs be difficult and arduous; yet the command of Christ is here indispensable, the precept high and exact. We must be all ear, to hear our own disgraces; and be as quietly attentive to an injurious slander, as to a homily of patience, or a lecture of perfection.

If a man vents his anger against his brother, even by those undervaluing terms of *fool* and *rascal*; Christ awards him the sentence of hell and judgment, Matt. v. 22, "The tongue" (as St. James says, ch. iii. 6) "is set on fire of hell." And here we see, by a kind of vicissitude and return, it kindles hell itself for the calumniator.

Has anger, therefore, prevailed so far as to fire our thoughts? Let it not proceed further, to inflame our expressions. If it has been our unhappiness to be surprised with the beginnings, let us, at least, cut short the progress. It is an untamed beast, and needs a bridle, without a metaphor. It is loud and destructive, and, like a lion, first it roars, and then it devours. Certainly, therefore, it concerns us to stop our own mouths, and that to keep in our peace, our happiness, our reputation from flying out; and not, in gratification of a silly angry humour, to word away our souls, or declaim ourselves into perdition.

But here, for our regulation both in the apprehension and practice of this duty, I shall subjoin this caution: namely, that a due expression of asperity against the enemies of God, the king, and the public peace, is not the reviling mentioned or intended in the text: the scene of which is properly private revenge, not a zealous espousal of the public injuries.

He that treats a rebel, and a murderer of his prince, in terms suitable to those actions, is not a reviler. But he that conceals or smooths a villain in the execrable practices of a public mischief, he is truly a reviler and a slanderer; for he reviles his conscience, and slanders his religion. It is a duty that every man owes to

the public, to call vice and villany by its own name; which name, if it be infamous, the cause is in him that deserves, not in him that bestows it.

For observe, that the great standard by which the text bids us measure ourselves in this duty, is Jesus Christ: who, though in his own cause, in his own personal affronts, "opened not his mouth," but passed over all with a meek and a silent sufferance; yet with what fervour and sharpness did he interpose his rebukes, in the public concerns of piety and religion!

When St. Peter himself went to cross him in the great business of the world's redemption, his passion and crucifixion; in what language did Christ answer him? No appellation but that of "Satan" was thought fit for him.

With what severity of speech did he also treat those public enemies of piety, and patrons of hypocrisy, the scribes and pharisees! "Whited walls," "rotten sepulchres," "generation of vipers," with other such like terms, were their constant titles: and may indeed serve indifferently for the scribes and pharisees of all ages; even those of ours also, did they not prevail above their progenitors in the several arts and more improved methods of hypocrisy.

By warrant, therefore, of the grand exemplar of meekness and patience, we are empowered to give great and public villains, and disturbers of society, names proper to their actions and merits. He that called Herod "fox," does not command us to call a fox a sheep, nor a vulture a dove: nor to give rebels and murderers occasion to think themselves innocent, by never telling them that they are otherwise. To soothe and flatter such persons, would be just as if Cicero had spoken commendatories of Antony, or made panegyrics upon Catiline.

He that commends a vile person, upbraids the virtuous; whose virtue never receives so fair a character, as by an impartial representment of the ugly lineaments and appearances of vice. Nay, he that commends a villain is not an approver only, but a party in his villany. Besides, the fruitless frustraneous vanity of such an essay; for bring all the force of rhetoric in the world, yet vice can never be praised into virtue: a rotten thing cannot be painted sound. A false gloss is but a poor corrective of a bad text.

And what I say against a commendation or smoothing of such unworthy persons, I may, with the same reason, affirm of a degenerous passing over and concealing their base actions: to bury them in silence, is to give them too honourable a funeral.

To what purpose is a ministry, if the ambassador of God must come with a tongue and conscience enslaved to the guilt and pleasure of an obnoxious auditory? when conscience must be reduced to that which fools call prudence, and even that prudence measured by a sordid compliance?

Must robbers and usurpers carry away the prey and booty, without so much as a hue and cry raised after them? It is a pitiful thing to imitate the lamb in nothing else, but in being dumb before those that have sheared us.

Let this, therefore, be fixed upon for the right stating of this duty; that it reaches not the sharp reprehensions of public persons (as all lawful preachers are) directed against public malefactors; but is properly a restraint of the expresses of a man's private revenge. In which, we confess, a man ought to be wholly passive, to lie open to the wrong, and to turn both ears to the railer, as well as both cheeks to the smiter; answering him as David did Shimei, "Let him rail on;" give him scope till he runs himself out of breath, and wearies himself into silence and a better behaviour.

Having thus declared the extent and nature of the duty enjoined in the words, and expressed in this negative term, of "not reviling again;" and withal, annexed a caution for its due limitation: I come now to

II. The second general thing proposed; which is to show *whence it is, that this duty comes to be so exceeding difficult.* It is so, I conceive, upon these grounds and causes.

1. From the peculiar provoking quality of ill language. Upon observation, we shall find, that most of the bitter hatreds and irreconcileable enmities that disturb the world, and sour the converse of mankind, have commenced merely upon the score of vilifying words. And what the reason of it is, I know not; yet certain it is, that men are more easily brought to forgive injuries done, than injuries said against them. One undervaluing speech shall dash the service of many years, and be looked upon as a sufficient forfeit of all the hopes of a laborious and long attendance.

Have not most of the duels that were ever fought, been undertaken upon the affront of provoking words? Have they had any trumpet to alarm them into the field, but that of a reviling tongue?

But we shall have a more lively discovery of the provocation of such virulent language, above real acts of injury, by comparing it with the contrary effects of smooth and fawning speeches. What a strange bewitchery is there in flattery! How, like a spiritual opium, does it intoxicate and abuse the understanding, even sometimes of men wise and judicious! so that they have knowingly, with their reason awake, and their senses about them, suffered themselves to be cheated and ruined by a sycophantical parasite; and even to be tickled to death, only for love of the pleasure of being tickled.

Nay, I have known men, grossly injured in their affairs, depart pleased, at least silent, only because they were injured in good

language, ruined in caresses, and kissed while they were struck under the fifth rib. And, therefore, it has been observed, that the greatest usurpers, and the falsest deceivers, have still been fair spoken; in the strength, or at least in the gloss of which, they have usurped and deceived successfully.

And, according to the difference of men's tempers this way, it is really true, that some judges shall, with less offence, pronounce sentence against a man, than some for him. To be condemned with words of softness and commiseration, is more pleasing than to be absolved with taunting gibes, insulting sarcasms, and imperious domineering exprobrations.

The world is generally governed by words and shows: for men can swallow the same thing under one name, which they would abominate and detest under another. The name of *king* was to the old Romans odious and insufferable; but in Sylla and Julius Cæsar they could endure the power and absoluteness of a king, disguised under the name of *dictator*.

Certainly, therefore, there is some peculiar energy, some charm in words, that they are able thus to overrule the very discourses of men's reason, and the clearest discernments of sense.

And I hope that, both by the very nature of the thing, and the advantage of its contrary, I have discovered a more than ordinary force, a strange power in these verbal assaults; a power that is operative, beyond the seeming nature and proportions of the thing: that a mere word should cut keener than a razor, and strike deeper than a dart; that a man should immediately swell, upon the hearing of it, as if he were bit by an adder, or poisoned by an asp. And this may be one reason, that renders the duty of not reviling again so difficult.

2. Another reason of its difficulty is, because nature has deeply planted in every man a strange tenderness of his good name, which, in the rank of worldly enjoyments, the wisest of men has placed before life itself. For, indeed, it is a more enlarged and diffused life, kept up by many more breaths than our own. It is the soul that keeps the body sweet, and a good name that keeps the soul. It is this that recommends us to converse, and preserves us from being noisome to society.

A good name is properly that reputation of virtue, that every man may challenge as his right and due, in the opinions of others, till he has made forfeit of it by the viciousness of his actions. But now every slander is an invasion upon that, and puts a virtuous person into the same condition of disrepute with the vicious, leaving him the severities and difficulties of being virtuous, without the reward of being thought so.

No wonder, therefore, if the mind of man rises with all its might against such as would make an inroad upon the prime enjoyment and most endeared part of its happiness. No wonder, if it catches at all means to repel or retaliate so destructive an

opposition; and so comes, at length, to the remorseless retribution of "an eye for an eye," reviling for reviling; and to bear away the spoils of another's reputation, to revenge, or at least to alleviate the loss of its own.

A man's reputation is his freehold, his birthright; and no man will endure to be tamely bereaved of it by the aspersion of a calumny, who has wit enough to resent, and power to revenge it. He that tears away a man's good name, tears his flesh from his bones; and, by letting him live, gives him only a cruel opportunity of feeling his misery, of burying his better part, and surviving himself.

When a man is dead indeed, he is the portion of rottenness and worms, and whatsoever else will gnaw upon or insult over him; but while he is alive, it is but the privilege of his nature to defend himself. When he shall be laid in his grave, men may fling what dirt they will upon him; but while he is above ground, no marvel, if, to keep himself clean, he throws it back again.

And with the more care and solicitousness may we allow him to manage his own preservation in this respect; forasmuch as a good name, though, while it continues whole and entire, it is bright and glistering, yet it has the other property of glass, to be also very brittle; and being once broken, to admit of no repair, no perfect soldering, and making up the breach.

And thus much for the grounds and reasons, upon which I conclude it so hard and irksome a thing for a man, being slandered and reviled, not to revile again, and return the slander. Indeed, nothing under that amazing Christian duty of absolute self-denial, can work a man to an unconcerned behaviour in this case; and to suffer so dear a portion of himself to be rent away from him, without repelling the violence, and revenging the hand that did it.

III. I come now to the third and last thing: which is, to show *by what means a man may work himself to such a composure and temper of spirit, as to be able to observe this great and excellent duty.* And here, when we consider what obstructions are to be conquered and removed, we must acknowledge, that nothing, under an omnipotent grace, can subdue the heart to such a frame. But as the workings of God do not exclude the subordination of our endeavours; so something must be done, on our part, towards it: and the best course that reason can find out, is to discipline and check our unruly passions, by a frequent consideration of, and serious reflection upon the disadvantages of the humour we contest against; and to discommend this of returning railing for railing, slander for slander, both to our practice and affection, I shall fasten only upon this one consideration; namely, that it is utterly useless to all rational intents and purposes: and this I shall make appear inductively, by recounting the several ends and

intents, to which, with any colour of reason, it may be designed; and then, by showing how utterly unfit it is to reach or effect any of them.

1. The first reason that would induce a man, upon provocation, to do a violent action by way of return, should be to remove the cause of that provocation. But the cause that usually provokes men to revile, are words and speeches; that is, such things as are irrevocable. Such a one vilified me; but can I, by railing, make that which was spoken, not to have been spoken? Are words and talk to be reversed? Or can I make a slander to be forgot, by rubbing up the memory of those that heard it with a reply?

Nay, if we look further, and state the cause of our anger, not upon the slander itself, but upon the malicious temper that was the cause of it; this is so far from being removed, that it is heightened, blown up, and inflamed by such a return.

Possibly that malignity that first threw the slander, not being exasperated by the rebound of another, would have vanished and expired in silence, perhaps in the ingenuities of repentance; and it is not impossible, but that, to make amends, it might, by a kind of antiperistasis, have turned into friendship; for injuries dissembled not unusually are exchanged for courtesies.

But the injury being once owned by a retribution, and advanced by defiance, like an opposed torrent it tumultuates, grows higher and higher, begins to fix, and so by an improvement of the humour, that which at first was but a sudden motion, rises into a violent rage, and from thence passes into a settled revenge.

2. Another end, inducing a man to return reviling for reviling, may be by this means to confute the calumny, and to discredit the truth of it. But this course is so far from having such an effect, that it is the only thing that gives it colour and credibility: all people being prone to judge, that a high resentment of a calumny proceeds from concernment, and that from guilt; which makes the sore place tender and untractable. *Convitia, si irascaris, agnita videntur*, says Tacitus.

The way of refelling calumnies is very different; they are weakened with contempt, confuted with innocence. If the calumniator bespatters and belies me, I will endeavour to convince him by my life and manners, but not by being like himself. It was a noble conclusion, that Caius Marius made against all the descants of men's tongues whatsoever; no speech, he said, could hurt him: *quippe vera, necesse est benè prædicet; falsam vita moresque mei superant.*

He that returns reviling for reviling, does not confute the railer, but outdo him: and thus to second him, is to authorize and countenance the action: for either it is good, and then why do I revenge it? or it is unworthy and vile, and then why do I imitate it? That certainly is fit first to be done, that is fit after to be followed.

If it is a base thing to revile, do not I, by reviling again, repeat that baseness, and credit an ill copy by transcribing it? Or do I think to disgrace an ugly face by drawing its picture? Surely that will be but a poor expedient, since the picture is still worse than the original. And therefore, if it looks ill in my enemy, it cannot but be much more uncomely in myself, who had an argument to avoid and hate the ill, by first seeing the ugliness of it represented in another.

And why should I degrade myself so much below my enemy, as to judge that fit and handsome in myself, which I first judged so indecent in him, and while I hate him, eagerly practise that thing for which I esteem him hateful?

3. But thirdly, a third end for which a man may pretend to give himself this liberty is, because in so doing he thinks he takes a full and proper revenge of him that first reviled him. But certainly there is no kind of revenge so poor and pitiful; for every dog can bark, and he that rails makes another noise indeed, but not a better. What boy, what woman in the streets cannot act as full and as shrewd a revenge, as the valiantest soldier, or the deepest politician in the world, if it lay only in the arts of contumely and reproachful language? When Goliah began to despise David, and to look upon him as a boy; then, and not before, he gives him a puerile, suitable defiance, that is, he reviles and scoffs at him.

Natural instinct has suggested to every creature to endeavour its own defence, by the use of that part or faculty, in which it has a peculiar strength and force. But surely a man's strength does not lie in his treasures of ill words, in a voluble dexterity of throwing out scurrilous abusive terms: no, he has a head to contrive, and valour to execute a nobler and more effectual revenge. But loudness and scurrility are the reproach, not the defence of men.

Nay, were I to argue against this intemperance of reviling, even to the revengeful person, I need no other arguments than what are deducible from the very topic of his own sin.

He that gives ill language does not prejudice his enemy, but forewarn him: he gives him fair admonition to double his guards to increase his circumspection, and consequently to frustrate al assaults of his adversary. The cur that barks, gives me opportunity to provide myself that he shall never bite me.

Revenge must not be heard, but felt, and never discovered, but in the execution; and therefore he gave shrewd counsel to the revengeful, who said, a man should never act a revenge upon his enemy, unless he did it so thoroughly, as to disable him from a retaliation.

Upon which ground, let it rather lie still, and wait its season; the longer it sleeps, the more strength it will gather, against the time that it comes to rise and exert itself. But he that lets it fly

out in angry words, and spreads his heart upon his lips, he is a trifler in this action; he betrays his design, and loses the opportunities of a well-ripened satisfactory revenge; and so contracts only the guilt, but reaches not the supposed gallantry of the sin.

4. In the fourth and last place, peradventure a man thinks, by thus repaying slander for slander, to manifest a generous greatness of spirit, in showing himself impatient of an affront. But in this very thought there is a gross, though usual mistake; for the scene of greatness and generosity lies as much in patience, as in action. Contempt naturally implies a man's esteeming of himself greater than the person whom he contemns: he therefore that slights, that contemns an affront, is properly superior to it; and he conquers an injury, who conquers his resentments of it. Socrates being kicked by an ass, did not think it a revenge proper for Socrates to kick the ass again.

Contempt is a noble and an innocent revenge, and silence the fullest expression of it. Except ônly storms and tempests, the great things of the world are seldom loud. Tumult and noise usually rise from the conflict of contrary things in a narrow passage; and just so does the loudness of wrath and reviling argue a contracted breast: such a one as has not room enough to wield and manage its own actions with stillness and composure.

What a noise and a buzz does the pitiful little gnat make, and how sharply does it sting! while the eagle passes the air in in silence, and never descends but to a noble and an equal prey. He, therefore, that thinks he shows any nobleness, or height of mind, by a scurrilous reply to a scurrilous provocation, measures himself by a false standard, and acts not the spirit of a man, but the spleen of a wasp.

And thus, I think, I have unravelled all the pleas that reason can make for a defensive reviling; and I am sure there is no sanctuary for it in religion. We read of none in scripture that used it in any manner, but are transmitted to us with a brand of a lasting infamy. Shimei, Rabshakeh, and one of the crucified thieves, are remarked to us for their railing. And the apostle Paul would have us shun the converse of such a one, as the fatal blasts of a pest, or a walking contagion; 1 Cor. v. 11, "I have written to you, not to keep company, if any one that is called a brother be an extortioner or a railer; with such a one no not to eat;" but especially at the Lord's table. This is his condition, this is his sentence; and certainly he, who is thus excommunicated and excluded from the company of the saints in this world, is not like to be thought fit for the society of angels in the next.

SERMON XXIII.

ON THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S ANGER.

PSALM XC. 11.

Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

THIS description of God's anger, set forth by such a pathetical exclamation, seems to come from a person that spoke not only his thoughts, but his experience; even from Moses, who had felt the sad effects of his own anger, and therefore might well be sensible of the weight of God's. When God showed himself as a legislator, it was with all the pomps of terror, and the circumstances of dread; but here we have him in the grimmer dress of a revenging judge. Then the mountain smoked, but now it flames. And Moses seems so possessed with an awful reflection upon the amazing terrors of the divine anger, that he can scarce look up; but with fear and distance, as it were, avoids the sight, and seems to have recourse to his veil, and to hide his face, not from being seen by men, but from seeing God.

Before we proceed upon the words, it will concern us to see how anger can be ascribed to God: for an infinite and divine nature cannot be degraded to those affections and weaknesses that attend ours. Anger is a passion, but God is impassible. Anger is always with some change in the person that has it, but God is unchangeable.

Crellius, in his treatise of God's attributes, asserts the affections of anger, love, hope, and the like, to be really and properly in God. Thus they, in a preposterous manner, deny Christ to be God, and yet make God to be a man. For they make him subject to those passions, which the Stoics will not allow in him who is perfectly wise, and a philosopher; but assert them to be weaknesses dwelling in vulgar breasts, that have not yet lopped off the excrescencies of the sensitive appetite, nor subdued their passions to the lure and dictates of right reason.

Certainly, therefore, anger and the like affections can by no means be ascribed to the infinitely perfect God, in the proper and usual acceptation of the words, but only by an anthropopathy: attributing that to God, which bears some analogy and proportion to that we find in men. Thus God is said to be angry, when he does some things that bear a similitude to those effects that anger produces in men.

It is therefore in God, not as a perfection inherent in his nature, but only as an effect of his will. Indeed, it is not in him at all, but is only an extrinsical denomination from a work wrought without him; from the miseries and calamities which he inflicts upon a guilty creature.

I cannot see any thing else of difficulty in the words. The prosecution of them I shall manage in these following particulars.

I. I shall lay down some preparatory considerations concerning God's anger.

II. I shall show those instances in which it does exercise and exert itself.

III. I shall consider those properties and qualifications, that declare and set forth the extraordinary greatness of it.

IV. I shall make some use and improvement of the whole.

I. For the first of these, I shall lay down these two preparatory cautional observations.

1. That every harsh and severe dispensation is not an effect of God's anger. The same effect, as to the matter of it, may proceed from very different causes. Love is sometimes put upon the rigour of those courses, which at the first aspect seem to carry in them the inscriptions of enmity and hostility.

God may sweep away a man's estate, snatch away a friend, stain his reputation; and yet the design of all this not be revenge, but remedy; not destruction, but discipline. He sees, perhaps, something evil in us to be cured, and something worse to be prevented; some luxuriancies to be abated, and some malignant humours to be evacuated; all which cannot be effected, but by sharp and displeasing applications. And in all the hard passages of providence, when God strips a man of all his externals, God's intent may be, not to make him miserable, but to make him humble; not to ruin, but to reduce him.

If you look only upon the outside of an affliction, you cannot distinguish from what principle it may proceed. Gehazi's leprosy, and Lazarus's sores, may seem to be inflicted by the same displeasure; and yet one was a curse for hypocrisy, and the other a trial of humility.

David's and Saul's afflictions were dispensed with a very diffefent hand: Saul could not pursue him so fast, but mercy followed him as close. St. Stephen was stoned, as well as Achan; but certainly God did not, with the same arm, fling the stone at one, with which he did at the other.

Consider the saints in Heb. xi. 37, afflicted, tormented, naked, destitute, sawn asunder. And what could anger itself do more against them? and yet the God who did all this, was not angry. That very love which makes God to be our friend, makes him sometimes to appear our enemy: to chastise our confidence, to raise our vigilance, and to give us safety instead of security.

Persons who are truly holy, and tender how they offend God, are yet very apt to look upon God's dealings on the wrong side, and to make hard conclusions concerning their own state and condition. David is much an example of this, who through the transports, sometimes of diffidence, sometimes of impatience, is high in his expostulations with God. Psalm lxxvii. 9, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? and hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" And in Psalm lxxiv. 1, "Why hast thou cast us off for ever? and why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?"

Now all this, perhaps, was commenced upon the sense of some outward affliction, not considering (as he does elsewhere) that when God deals with his chosen ones, with the sheep of his pasture, his rod is still attended with his staff; and as with one he strikes, so with the other he supports.

And as persons holy are, upon the sharp passages of providence, very prone to conclude God's anger against themselves; so on the other side, men of a morose, uncharitable, conscience-pretending temper, from such instances of outward miseries, are as ready to denounce God's anger against others. If such dogs meet with a Lazarus, instead of licking his sores they will bite his person, bark at his name, and worry his reputation.

Nothing can befall any man besides themselves, but presently it is a judgment; and they have cried out, Judgments, judgments! so long, that they are even become judgments themselves: indeed the greatest and sorest that a nation can groan under.

Wherefore let us rest assured of this, that the roughest of God's proceedings do not always issue from an angry intention: it is very possible, because very usual, that they may proceed from the clean contrary. The same clouds which God made use of heretofore to drown the earth, he employs now to refresh it. He may use the same means to correct and to better some, that he does to plague and to punish others. The same hand and hatchet that cuts some trees for the fire, may cut others into growth, verdure, and fertility. This is the first thing to be observed.

2. We must observe, that there is a great difference between God's anger and his hatred; as great as there is between the transient expiring heat of a spark, and the lasting continual fires which supply a furnace. The nature of hatred is to pursue its object to death, to a total extinction of its very being. And as it is said of God's love, so, I think, it may be also said of his hatred, that "whom he hates, he hates to the end."

I do not desire to wade into the depths of God's decrees; for our notions about these are very uncertain, and therefore our determinations must needs be dangerous.

But surely we are exceeding ignorant of the actuality, sim-

plicity, and immutability of the divine nature, if we think that God can alter his counsels, or revoke his purposes.

But we shall not meddle with God's hatred, as it is bound up in his purpose, but as it lies open and visible in the execution: and so it is the pursuance of a standing enmity against a sinner, a gradual accomplishing of his final destruction, a disposal of all passages, all contingencies and circumstances of his life, to the ruin of his soul, and the fatal issues of damnation.

But God's anger is not of so malign and destructive an influence; the choicest of his saints have shared in some of the severest instances of it. God was angry with Moses, angry with David, angry with Hezekiah, and with his peculiar people; but we do not read that he hated them. The effects of his anger differ as much from the effects of his hatred, as the smart of a present pain from the corrosions of an abiding poison. It must, indeed, be confessed, that the heats of it are fierce and dreadful: but it is such a fire, as though it *burns*, yet it does not *consume* the bush; it may affright, but it will not destroy a Moses. Nevertheless, though it does not bring God's elect under the *power*, it may bring them into the *shadow of death*, into the suburbs of hell, and give them a glimpse of those horrors, a taste of those vials of wrath, that are poured out in full measure only upon the sons of perdition.

And thus much for the first general head.

II. I shall now, in the second place, show *what are those instances in which this unsupportable anger of God does exercise and exert itself.* I shall mention three.

1. First, it inflicts immediate blows and rebukes upon the conscience. There are several passages in which God converses with the soul immediately by himself; and these are always the most quick and efficacious, whether in respect of comfort or of terror. That which comes immediately from God, has most of God in it. As the sun, when he darts his beams in a direct perpendicular line, does it most forcibly, because most immediately.

Now there are often terrors upon the mind, which flow thus immediately from God, and therefore are not weakened or refracted by passing through the instrumental conveyance of a second cause: for that which passes through a thing, is ever contracted according to the narrowness of its passage. God's wrath inflicted by the creature, is like poison administered in water, where it finds an allay in the very conveyance. But the terrors here spoken of, not being inflicted by the intermediate help of any thing, but being darted forthwith from God himself, are by this incomparably more strong and piercing.

When God wounds a man by the loss of an estate, of his health, of a relation, the smart is but commensurate to the thing which is lost, poor and finite. But when he himself employs his

whole omnipotence, and is both the archer, and himself the arrow, there is as much difference between this and the former, as when a house lets fall a cobweb, and when it falls itself upon a man.

God strikes in that manner that he swears; never so effectually, as when only *by himself*. A man striking with a twig does not reach so dreadful a blow, as when he does it with his fist; and so makes himself not only the striker, but the weapon also.

These immediate blows of God upon the soul, seem to be those things, that in Psalm xxxviii. 2, are called "God's arrows;" they are strange, sudden, invincible amazements upon the spirit, leaving such a damp upon it, as defies the faint and weak cordials of all creature-enjoyments. The wounds which God himself makes, none but God himself can cure. And thus much for the first way.

2. God's anger exerts itself by embittering of afflictions. Every affliction is of itself a grievance, and a breach made upon our happiness; but there is sometimes a secret energy, that so edges and quickens its afflictive operation, that a blow levelled at the body, shall enter into the very soul. As a bare arrow tears and rends the flesh before it, but if dipped in poison, as by its edge it pierces, so by its adherent venom it festers.

We do not know what strength the weakest has to do mischief when the divine wrath shall join with it: and how easily a small calamity will sink the soul, when this shall hang weights upon it. What is the reason that David is sometimes so courageous, that "though he walks through the shadow of death, yet he will fear no evil?" as in Psalm xxiii. 4. And at another time, "God no sooner hides his face, but he is troubled," as Psalm xxx. 7. What is the cause that a man sometimes breaks through a greater calamity, and at another time the same person fails and desponds under a less of the same nature? I say, whence can this be, but that God infuses some more grains of his wrath into one, than into the other?

Men may undergo many plagues from God, and yet by the enchantment of pleasures, the magic of worldly diversions, they may, like Pharaoh, harden their hearts, and escape the present sting of them. But when God shall arm a plague with sensible, lively mixtures of his wrath, believe it, this will not be enchanted away; but the sinner, like those magicians, (whether he will or no) must be forced to confess, "that it is the finger of God," and consequently must bend and lie down under it.

God may cast a man into prison, nail him to the bed of sickness, yet still he may continue master of his comforts; because the sun may shine, while the shower falls. The soul may see the light of God's countenance, while it feels the weight of his hand. But for God to do all these things in anger, and to mark

the prints of his displeasure and his indignation upon every blow; this alters the whole dispensation, and turns it from a general passage of providence into a particular design of revenge.

It is like a deep water scalding hot, which as it drowns, so at the same time it redoubles its fatal influence, and also burns to death. An unwholesome air will of itself make a man sick and indisposed; but when it is infected, and its native malignity heightened with a superadded contagion, then presently it kills. And such a difference is there between afflictions in themselves, and afflictions as they are fired, poisoned, and enlivened with God's wrath. And thus much for the second way by which God's anger puts forth itself, it embitters afflictions.

3. It shows and exerts itself by cursing of enjoyments. We may, like Solomon, have all that wit can invent, or heart desire, and yet at last, with the same Solomon, sum up all our accounts in "vanity and vexation of spirit."

There is "a pestilence that walks in darkness," a secret invisible blow that smites the firstborn of all our comforts, and straight we find them dead, and cold, and sapless; not answering the quickness of desire, or the grasp of expectation. God can send a worm to bite the gourd, while it flourishes over our heads; and while he gives riches, deny a heart to enjoy them.

For whence is it else that there are some who flourish with honours, flow with riches, swim with the greatest affluence of plenty, and all other the materials of delight; and yet they are as discontented, as dissatisfied, as the poorest of men? Care rises up and lies down with them, sits upon their pillow, waits at their elbow, runs by their coaches; and the grim spirits of fear and jealousy haunt their stately houses and habitations.

I say, whence is this, but from a secret displeasure of God, which takes out the vitals, the heart, and the spirit of the enjoyment; and leaves them only the *caput mortuum* of the possession.

We may be apt to envy such or such a one's greatness, his estate, his happiness; but greatness is not always happiness. It is not impossible, but that he who has this, may rate it with another esteem, and perhaps feel that in it which we cannot see. The garment may present fair, and handsome, and neat to the eye which beholds it; but still it may wring the body that wears it.

It was a notable speech of Haman, Esther v. 11—13, reckoning up his riches, his substance, and all his grandeur; and then bringing up the rear of all with this sad conclusion: "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." God put in a little coloquintida, which spoiled the whole mess. A little spice of contempt from his rival in the king's favour, soured all the relish which he had from his other honours and enjoyments.

Christ determines the case fully and philosophically in those words, Luke xii. 15, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of those things which he does possess." No; they are the smiles and favour of God the giver, that must animate and give life to the gift. As it is not such a number of hours and minutes, such a space of time, but it is the shining of the sun, which makes the day.

If God frowns and is angry, presently the whole scene of affairs is changed, all is overcast; power is a trouble, honour a vanity, riches a burden; and gold loses its brightness, and retains only its heaviness.

Is it any pleasure to a son to have his father reach him meat, if he does it with a frowning countenance, that looks as if he would devour, instead of feeding him? It makes that which is meat, not to be food; fit only to fill, but unable to nourish. God can make a man tumble, and toss, and be disturbed upon a bed of down. He can make his silks sit uneasy, his cup bitter, and his delicacies tasteless and insipid, and spread a dulness and a lethargy over all his recreations.

Alas! it is not the body and the mass of those things which we call plenty, that can speak comfort, when the wrath of God shall blast and dispirit them with a curse. We may build our nest soft and convenient, but that can easily place a thorn in the midst of it, that shall check us in our repose.

And this is the third way by which God's anger shows itself; it spoils and curses our enjoyments.

III. Come we now to the next general head proposed; namely, to show *those properties and qualifications, which declare and set forth the extraordinary greatness of God's anger.* I shall instance in these four.

1. The greatness of it appears in this, that it is fully commensurate to the very utmost of our fears, which is noted even in the words of the text; "According to thy fear, so is thy wrath."

Now we must observe, that all the passions of the mind enlarge and greaten their objects, and stretch things from the just standard of truth to the compass of imagination. Hence love, fear, and hope, always speak in hyperboles, and return the object greater than they received it; being, as it were, the womb of the soul, where things are no sooner entertained, but they grow, and are always brought forth bigger than they were conceived.

From this it is, that experience judges short of the judgment of expectation; because expectation swells and widens according to the credulity of passion and desire: but every thing comes stripped to its native truth and poorness, in the severe impartial verdict of fruition.

And of all the passions, fear in this increasing faculty exceeds. Fear does not only tremble at shadows, but makes them; that is, it gives you something larger than the substance. Compare a danger feared and endured, and see how much the copy spreads beyond the original. Fear still supererogates and overdoes; and when it is to transcribe the truth of things, it gives a comment instead of a translation.

What malefactor is condemned, who is not first executed by his fears? Who does not both anticipate and enlarge those miseries, which truth and feeling would quickly contract to their own proper smallness? So that the execution endured, is not so much a punishment for his fault, as a release from his fears.

With how many blows does this kill! whereas death gives but one. Let a man have but a friend at sea, or in the wars, and how many storms and shipwrecks, wounds and battles, does this solicitous passion represent. Evils crueller than war, and larger than the sea; which, though of all other things the most remorseless, yet often spare those, upon whom fear has long since passed the sentence of death.

Let it run through the whole creation, it still adds, and would go a pitch beyond God and nature; not contracting the world into a map, but the world itself at largest is rather a map and an abridgment of our fears. And when at length it comes to God, it would do the same by him, were it not forestalled by infinity, that stops such attempts, and makes enlargements impossible. Such, we see, is the nature of this vast passion.

But now the wrath of God is the only thing which fear itself cannot enlarge; and eternity, which it cannot multiply. This alone equals this passion, and bids defiance to all additions.

And here let any man call up his invention, and summon his fancy, the only creating faculty that is given to the creature, and which finds matter as well as form, and, like a little deity, creates things out of nothing: I say, let him give scope to his imagination, to rove over all terrors, and to represent to itself not only things existent, but possible, and new ideas of things, and then unite them all into one apprehension of fear; yet here he shall find, that even imagination is still within the bounds of truth: the subject is so large, so inexhaustible, that there is reality enough in it to warrant the highest reaches of imagination.

Herein therefore does the divine wrath display its dreadfulness transcendently above all created terrors, that it verifies our fears, and realizes the utmost boundless suggestions of a fearful mind.

2. The greatness of God's anger appears in this, that it not only equals, but infinitely exceeds and transcends our fears. The misery of the wicked, and the happiness of the saints, run in an equal parallel; so that by one you may best measure the proportions of the other. And for the former of these, we have a lively description of it in 1 Cor. ii. 9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for those that love him." Why, the very same provisions of wrath he has made for those that hate him.

Now, what can be more unsatiable than the eye, greedier than the ear, wider and more comprehensive than thought? Yet, alas! both sight and intellect, sense and reason, are tired and swallowed up in the vast abyss of that wrath, which spreads itself into all the spaces of infinity. Endure it we may one day (if mercy prevent not), but never comprehend it; as the sun is known, not by our seeing his full bulk, which is here impossible, but by being scorched with his heat.

And herein, sense goes a reach beyond understanding, which cannot discourse itself into a clear notion or theory of the divine wrath. For as God spoke to Job about his framing of the world, the like discourse we may address to any curious inquisitor about his wrath.

Where wert thou when God first sealed his decrees of election and reprobation? when he prepared the chambers of death, and the treasures of his wrath? when he laid the foundations of the infernal pit, and spread darkness over it, and covered it with the secret horror for ever?

If we can answer these inquiries, and bring the matter we speak of under certain descriptions, then we may confess that our fear may reach the full compass of its object.

Our fear cannot be larger than our fancy; but even curiosity, and fancy itself, fails in the researches of an infinite. A thing not to be encountered, but by our faith; and of which amazement, ecstasy, and astonishment, are the best expressions.

3. The greatness of divine wrath appears in this, that though we may attempt it in our thoughts, yet we cannot bring it within the comprehensions of our knowledge. And the reason is, because things which are the proper objects of feeling, are never perfectly known, but by being felt. We may speak indeed high words of wrath and vengeance, but pain is not felt in a discourse. We may as well taste a sound, and see a voice, as gather an intellectual idea of misery; which is conveyed, not by apprehension, but smart; not by notion, but experience.

Survey the expressions of scripture, and see it there clothed and set forth in "fire and brimstone," in "the worm that never dies," in "utter darkness," in "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." But what are all these, but shadows! mere similitudes, and not things! condescensions rather than instructions to our understanding! poor figurative essays, where, contrary to the nature of rhetoric, the figure is still beneath the truth.

Fire no more represents God's wrath, than the picture of fire itself represents its heat: and for the proof of this, let the notional believer be an unanswerable argument, who reads, sees, and hears all these expressions, and yet is not at all moved by

them; which sufficiently shows, that there is no hell in the description of hell.

But now, there is no man who has actually passed under a full trial of God's wrath; none alive, who ever encountered the utmost of God's anger: and if any man should hereafter try it, he would perish in the trial, so that he could not report his experience. This is a furnace that consumes while it tries; as no man can experimentally inform us what death is, because he is destroyed in the experiment.

4. And lastly, we may take a measure of the greatness of God's anger by comparing it with the anger of men. How dreadful is the wrath of a king! It is said in Prov. xix. 12, to be like the roaring of a lion; and when he roars, all the beasts of the forest tremble. What a weak thing is the greatest and most flourishing favourite, when his prince shall frown him into confusion! Haman, as the greatest of them, found it so. And to take another instance; how horrible, how amazing is the wrath of a conquering enemy! When anger sits upon a victorious sword, who dares approach it, who does not fly before it!

Are we not sometimes astonished to read of whole fields strewed with carcasses, streets running down with blood, desolations of whole cities and countries; not so much as one stone being left to cover the ruins of another? And yet, all these are but the works of a pitiful, enraged, angry, mortal creature, whose breath is in his nostrils, and whose rage cannot outlast it.

And if these are so terrible, what can be said of the terrors of an almighty wrath, of an infinite indignation? the voice of which (as the psalmist tells us, Psalm xxix.) tears up the cedars, shakes the wilderness, divides the flames of fire, and removes mountains; so that the whole creation bends and cracks under it, and the strongest things in nature, confessing their weakness, return to their native dust, and crouch, and shrink into their first nothing.

Take and single out the most considerable man, endue him with as much power as mortality can wield, clothe him with as much majesty as can dwell upon human nature; and then let his anger swell up to an equal proportion to both these: yet still there is as vast a disparity between this and the divine wrath, as there is between the persons who are angry, between a finite and an infinite being.

And thus having despatched the third general head proposed, come we now, in the

IV. And last place, *to make some improvement of the point*; which may be various: as,

1. It may serve to discover to us the intolerable misery of such as labour under a lively sense of God's wrath for sin. Certainly they struggle with the quickest pains, and the most restless vexatious troubles, that the nature of man is capable of lying

under. Few do heartily commiserate the condition of such persons, because few have an experimental sense of God's wrath bringing the guilt of sin home, and binding it close to their consciences. Few know what it is to feel what they only hear and read; and to have the very flames of hell flashing in their guilty faces. Yet some there are in the world, whom God is pleased to deal with in this manner; such as he follows with all his storms, such as even weep away their eyes, and grow old in misery, and from their youth up suffer his terrors with a troubled mind. So that the whole course of their life is a certain wrestling with God, and a kind of grappling with the wrath of the Almighty, by which they are often foiled, and cast, and flung into the very depths of horror and desperation.

And thus God sometimes thinks fit to discipline even such as he loves, such as he designs for heaven and a glorious eternity, leading them through the vale of tears to the land of promise. For by this he serves many great purposes, both of his own glory, and their happiness: it being the most sure, direct, and immediate way to possess the heart of such with a deep and quick sense of the intolerable evil of sin, and God's unspeakable detestation and abhorrence of it; that it should provoke him to lay on such heavy and afflictive strokes upon those whom he otherwise so dearly loves; that it seems, for a time, to shut up the bowels of mercy itself, and to represent a tender father in the guise and posture of the fiercest enemy.

2. This may serve also to discover to us the ineffable vastness of Christ's love to mankind in his sufferings for them. The whole burden of the divine wrath which we have been hitherto discoursing of, he freely took upon his own shoulders; he intercepted the blow; he took the dreadful cup of God's fury out of our hands, and drank off the very dregs of it; and so great was the strength, so venomous was the mixture of it, that he sweat blood, cried out, and was amazed. All that we have been speaking of, and much more than we can speak, fell upon him like a pouring thundering storm from heaven: a storm, from which there could be no flight nor shelter; so that it crushed and quite beat down his humanity, till the very extremity of pain and anguish dissolved the union between his innocent soul and body, bringing him into the blackest regions of death and darkness for a season. All the direful stings of God's anger fastened upon him, all the poisoned darts of his vengeance struck into his soul; so that they even terrified him who was God, and, as it were, shook and staggered omnipotence itself. And all this befell him for the infinite love he bore to the sons of men, who must otherwise have perished by the justice which they had provoked. His love and his sufferings were both beyond all parallel; and from one you may well take the dimensions of the other. Never was any love equal to his love, because, indeed, never was any sorrow

like to his sorrow. For certainly so great, so pressing, so insupportable was it, that nothing but an infinite power could undergo such a burden, and nothing but an infinite love would.

3. The foregoing discourse speaks terror to such as can be quiet and at peace within themselves, after the commission of great sins. Nothing, upon a rational ground, can be so fearful as such a stupid want of fear. For upon what solid principles of reason can such persons be secure? Do they think that their sins do not deserve the divine wrath? or that they can either endure or escape what they have so deserved? Do they conclude, that there is perfect peace between God and them, because the terrible effects of his fury do not actually roar against them? Are they therefore finally discharged, because they are not presently called to an account? No, certainly, these are frail and fond considerations, for any rational person to build his peace upon: for every sin stands registered in the black book of heaven, and that with all its circumstances and particularities: and consequently has the same sting, and guilt, and destructive quality, as if it were actually tearing and lashing the sinner, with the greatest horror and anguish of mind imaginable. And no man knows how soon God may awaken and let loose the tormenting power of sin upon his conscience; how soon he may set fire to all that fuel that lies dormant, and treasured up in his sinful breast. This he may be sure of, that whensoever God does so, it will shake all the powers of his soul, scatter his easy thoughts, and lay all the briskness and jollity of his secure mind in the dust. A murdering piece may lie still, though it be charged, and men may walk by it and over it safe, and without any fear, though all this while it has death in the belly of it; but when the least spark comes to fire, and call forth its killing powers, every one will fly from its fatal mouth, and confess that it carries death with it. Just so it is with the divine wrath; nobody knows the force of it till it be kindled.

But now God has, by a perpetual decree, awarded the sad sentence of "tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil," Rom. ii. 9. So that if he gives not the sinner his portion of sorrow here, it is to be feared he has it in full reserve for him hereafter. Upon which account, the present quiet of his condition is so far from ministering any just cause of satisfaction to him, that he has reason to beg upon his knees, that God would alter the method of his proceeding, and rather compound and strike him with some present horror for sin, than sink him under the insupportable weight of an eternal damnation. When a man must either have his flesh cut and burnt, or die with a gangrene, would he not passionately desire the surgeon to cut, and burn, and lance him, and account him his friend for all these healing severities? This is the sinner's case; and therefore when, upon his commission of any great sin, God seems to be silent, and to

connive, let him not be confident, but fear. For one may sometimes keep silence, and smile too, even out of very anger and indignation. If the present bill of his accounts be but small, it is a shrewd argument that there is a large reckoning behind.

4. In the fourth and last place, the most natural sequel and improvement of all that has been said of God's anger, is a warning against that cursed thing which provokes it. We see how dreadfully it burns; let us beware of the sin by which it is kindled.

Sin is the thing that exasperates goodness, that makes love angry, and puts mercy itself into a rage. God's anger never seizes upon any but a sinner. Christ himself could not feel it, till he was a sinner by imputation. It seizes upon the soul, as distempers use to do upon the body; which never fasten an infection, but where they meet with an inward corruption.

In a word, I have shown how devouring and consuming the divine wrath is, and how sin is the only thing that it preys upon. And therefore, all the advice that, I think, can be given, is, that men would begin here, and not expect to extinguish the flame, till they withdraw the fuel. Let them but do this, and God will not fail to do the other.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

GOD TO BE FEARED RATHER THAN MAN.

MATTHEW X. 28.

Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

CHRIST, who came into the world to engage in a spiritual war against the ways of the world, is here, like a provident commander, despatching a regiment, a little regiment of twelve apostles, for this evangelical expedition. And in the first verse of this chapter, we have him reading to them their commission, which runs very full and large; extending to the cure of all maladies and distempers, and the subjugation of the powers of darkness. From the second verse to the fourth, we have him taking a list or muster of their names: and then from the fifth verse almost to the end of the chapter, we have a more full and determinate explication of their commission, as to its just latitude and extent. And that,

1st. In respect of the place where they were to administer it; and that was within the precincts and bounds of Judea: in the fifth and six verses. They were not to visit the Samaritans; the children were to be served before the servants.

2dly. In respect of the doctrine they were to preach; and this was a preparatory to the gospel, afterwards to be preached by Christ himself: ver. 7, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Now in order to their more vigorous execution of this commission, he does accordingly instruct and admonish them concerning those things which might lie as impediments and obstacles in their way.

His instructions are reducible to these two: 1. A caution against the luxury of the world, in the ninth and tenth verses. 2. An encouragement against the cruelty of the world, from the sixteenth verse almost to the end of the chapter.

Thus he summed up his divine instructions as Epictetus did his moral, in a compendious but comprehensive Ἀπέχου καὶ ἀνέχου, abstain and endure; the one for the pleasures, the other for the troubles of the world.

1. He cautions them against the superfluities of the world; "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, nor scrip for your journey," ver. 9. Christ sent them forth as preachers, and that by his own special order, itinerant. Gold and silver, though they

are sometimes convenient, yet they are always heavy: many travellers, while they have been anxiously troubled with the thoughts of securing their money, have missed of their way. Christ sends his disciples also as soldiers, and therefore bids them take neither scrip, nor cloaks, nor staves. We should look upon him as a strange soldier, that when he is upon his march, and to go upon service, instead of his sword should take his knapsack. These are all hinderances, clogs, and burdens, and, according to the proper Latin word, they are called *impedimenta bellica.* Christ would take them off from all worldly care; and therefore, to pursue the metaphor, he provides them quarter, free quarter in his service. "The workman," says he, "is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye come, inquire in it who is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence." Christ knew it was not convenient for his ministers, while they should be engaging all the stress of their endeavours in so high an employment, to be carking and caring for a maintenance; and to be put upon providing for their own bodies, while they should provide for others' souls.

2. He encourages them against the cruelty of the world. In the former he forbids them to be luxurious, in this latter to be fearful. Either of these are absolutely opposite to a military posture: and he fortifies them, by an impartial acquainting them what they should endure. And this is a considerable piece of armour: for the mind of man is able to endure many an evil upon expectation, that it cannot upon surprise. Where, from Christ's method, in sending his disciples to preach the gospel, we may gain this observation by the way, viz. that when a man enters upon the ministry, it is a matter of signal consequence, to be forewarned of, and so in some measure to be forearmed against, all the discouragements that he is like to meet with in the faithful administration of his duty. "Behold," says Christ, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." In the sixth verse, he had said, that he sent them to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They went to them indeed as to sheep, but they found them to be wolves: they were lost sheep, such as had lost their nature, and degenerated into a wolvish kind. Now there could not be a more discouraging speech than this. To send sheep abroad alone, was discouragement enough, for there be others ready to oppose and wrong them, besides wolves; and if their was none, yet their own weakness and wandering were enough to scatter them: but to send them to wolves, who have a natural antipathy against them, an irreconcilable hatred, not to be satisfied but by their blood; this is the highest aggravation of a deplored estate. One wolf is able to destroy a flock of sheep, how then shall a poor handful of twelve sheep withstand whole herds of wolves? Yet Christ did well to let them know the worst of their entertainment, that amidst all their other miseries, they might at least be kept from that disheartening misery of a

disappointment. Every man who engages in Christ's service, ventures himself amongst wolves; such as with remorseless fury will prey upon his reputation, tear his comforts, devour whatsoever is dear to him; and he who expects to find favour amongst such wolves, must first cease to be a sheep. But now Christ, as he tells them the danger, so he prescribes the remedy; and against the opposition of men, he tells them they must join the forces of prudence and innocence: in the sixteenth verse, "Be ye wise as serpents, but harmless as doves." The brazen impregnable wall of a good conscience, is that alone which is able to withstand and repulse the injuries of the world. If we must do penance, let us do it in the white of our own innocence. To be free from sin, is the only way to be free from fear.

But now Christ, to make his admonitions the more particular, and so the more effectual, descends to those particular things, which he knew they chiefly feared. And these are three: 1. Bodily torments; 2. Disgrace; 3. Death.

Christ lays in an antidote against the fear of each of these.

1. For bodily torments, he tells them they should be brought before kings and governors, and be scourged for the profession of the truth, in the 17th verse: but in the 22d, he gives the encouragement, "He that endures to the end shall be saved." Salvation is a reward sufficient to crown the endurance of the most irksome calamity.

2. For disgrace; he tells them they would fare but ill as to their reputations, but yet no worse than himself: they might be called factious, seditious; but when the master is called *devil*, the servant may well endure the name of *rascal*. Suetonius, among those few good things that he said Nero did in his reign, reckons his persecution of the Christians, in these terms; *Affecti suppliciis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novæ et maleficæ.* Christ forearms them against these contumelies, by telling them, that he partook of the same slanders: and we know society in affliction does alleviate it. However, the society of a master enduring the same with his servant, although it should afford no cause of comfort, yet it takes off all cause of complaint. (2.) He comforts them with the consideration of the day of judgment, ver. 26, at which time, whatsoever is now covered should be revealed. Though they are at present aspersed with false calumnies, and their names darkened with the malign exhalations that come from the open sepulchres of reviling throats; as we may read in Minucius Felix, and a black catalogue of foul falsities charged upon the Christians: yet the day of judgment will clear their innocence, and wipe off all aspersions. The day is a discovering time, and that which lay hid in the dark night of persecution, will be laid open and manifest at the last day.

3. The third thing, which is the φοβερῶν φοβερώτατον, the terrible of terribles, is death; and this he cautions them against

in the words of the text; and that upon the score of these three reasons: (1.) Because it is but the death of the body, and therefore not the death of the man. (2.) Because hell is more to be feared, and the greater fear swallows up the less. (3.) Because they live under the special care of God's overseeing providence; and therefore cannot be taken away, without his special appointment and permission. The argument runs strongly *à minore ad majus*, in the 29th verse. If he takes so great care of so inconsiderable creatures as sparrows, so that the hand of the destroyer cannot reach so much as one of them without a warrant from his providence; how much more shall he preserve you, who have a perfection of nature much beyond theirs, and a profusion of grace beyond the perfection of your nature!

I shall resume some of these reasons in the handling of the doctrine that I shall raise; but before I deduce any doctrine from the words, I shall endeavour to clear off an objection: and it is this.

Obj. Christ commands his disciples here, not to fear those that can kill the body. But how is this consistent with some other of his commands? as for instance, in the 17th verse, he bids them "beware of men:" and in the 23d verse, when they are "persecuted in one city," he bids them "flee into another." Now to flee from an enemy, is something more than to fear him.

Ans. 1. The words, "Fear not them that can kill the body," may be understood comparatively; that is, do not fear them that kill the body, so much as you fear him that is able to destroy the soul. And so this way of speaking carries in it a Hebraism; for the Hebrews usually express a comparison between two things, in respect of some third, not by attributing of it in a greater degree to one, and in a less degree to the other, but by absolutely affirming it of one, and denying it of the other. As God says, "He will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" that is, he will rather have mercy than sacrifice. And this may be one way of interpreting the words.

2. We may distinguish of a twofold fear.

(1.) A fear of solicitous anxiety, such as makes us let go our confidence in God's providence, causing our thoughts so to dwell upon the dreadfulness of the thing feared, as to despair of a deliverance. And with such a kind of fear, Christ absolutely forbids them to fear those that kill the body. It being very derogatory to God, as if his mercy did not afford as great arguments for our hope, as the cruelty of man for our fears.

(2.) The second sort of fear, is a fear of prudential caution, whereby a man, from the due estimate of an approaching evil, endeavours his own security. And this kind of fear is not only lawful, but also laudable. For to what purpose should God have naturally implanted in the heart of man a passion of fear, if it might not be exercised and affected with suitable objects; that is, things to be feared. Now under this sort of fear, we may reckon

that to which Christ advises his disciples, in these expressions; "Beware of men," and "Flee from one city into another."

These things thus premised, the words of the text are full and pregnant with many great concerning truths. As,

1. That it is within the power of man to divest us of all our temporal enjoyments; for so much, according to the phrase of scripture, is comprehended in this word "body." Christ bids them not fear those that kill the body; wherefore it is implied, that it is in their power to do so much: men may take away all our temporals. And this should much allay our affections to these things: for why should we set our mind upon that which is not? Happiness cannot be placed in these; inasmuch as one of the great properties of happiness, even according to Aristotle, is, that it should be in our power, *οἰκεῖον ἀγαθόν*: but these things are not; and why should we then open our arms, to embrace that which we cannot clasp? From the enjoyment of the least morsel of bread, even to life itself, we stand at the mercy of those who oftentimes have no mercy; *Tuæ vitæ dominus est, quisquis est contemptor suæ*, says Seneca: "He that is so desperate as to contemn his own life, has made himself master of yours."

2. The second proposition deducible from the words is this; that the soul of man is immortal. "Fear not them that can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul:" this is beyond the reach of all created power. Now this is a foundation truth, upon the removal of which, religion falls to the ground. Religion is that which awes the mind to the doing of good, and the abstaining from evil, from hope of reward, and fear of punishment eternal. The thought of these has a persuasive, and almost a coercive influence upon all our actions. But if the soul dies with the body, the hope and fear of these will die before the soul. If the soul were mortal, our Saviour's exhortation and argument amounts to nothing.

3. The third observation that arises from the words, is this; that God has an absolute and plenary power to destroy the whole man: "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." This should silence the proud regrets and murmurings of our hearts, at the absoluteness of God's decrees and purposes: for why may not his decree be as absolute as his power? If he can do what he will, why may not he decree what he will? But all these reasonings proceed from that innate self-love that we bear to the interest of our own natures. We would fain have that unjust for God to do, that is grievous for us to suffer.

The fourth observation, which takes in the sense of all the rest, and which I shall insist upon, is this; that the thought of damnation ought to have greater weight upon us to engage our fears, than the most exquisite miseries that the power or malice of man is able to inflict.

The prosecution of this will lie in these two things.

I. To show what is in these miseries, which men are able to inflict, that may lessen our fears of them.

II. To show what is that surpassing misery in damnation, that ought (as I may so speak) to engross our fears.

I. Concerning the first there are seven considerations that may and ought to lessen our fears of those miseries that may be inflicted upon us by men.

1. As first, that they are temporal, and concern only this life; and there is nothing that can render a being of an eternal duration miserable, but such a misery as is eternal: and nothing ought rationally to be feared, but such a thing as is inconsistent with the happiness of our nature. Now these three things, this triumvirate of misery, that we apprehend to bereave us of our happiness, are either,

(1.) Loss of reputation. But, alas, what is that, but a malignant blast of a virulent mouth upon our names? and that which is but a blast, will pass away like a blast. Let envy and malice vomit out all the scandals and reproaches that they can invent, or the devil suggest; let them pursue us with incessant scoffs all our days; yet our dust shall be at quiet, and our soul at rest.

(2.) Let it be loss of an estate; though a man has neither bread to feed, nor raiment to clothe him, yet still all these wants are only commensurate with his life; and when his life is but for a moment, his miseries cannot be long. He must go naked, and stripped of all, out of the world; and if he is stripped of his estate at present, he is only in a posture of leaving the world beforehand.

(3.) Let it be loss of life; yet this is quickly past. Aristotle observes, that generation and corruption are changes that are done in a moment: *Generatio et corruptio fit in instanti.* And should the fear of that be continual, the endurance of which is but for an instant? The time of living is short, but the time of death is much shorter. When the misery passes away in a moment, a man has not time to be miserable. Let every Christian remember that he is immortal; and let not these things dismay him. He shall live and abide, when these things are past and gone. This was a cutting reprehension to Peter: "What, Peter, canst not thou watch with me for an hour?" There is nothing that is momentary, which deserves either a man's affections or his fears. His miseries are like a river; while he looks upon them, they run from him. Still let him consider this, that as his life passes away, so do his calamities; which can no more abide, while this is in flight, than one in a coach can remain in this place, while the coach is going to another. Wherefore, since Providence hath contracted our calamities, let every man contract his fears. He is upon a career, as well hasting from the miseries as the happiness of this world. He is like grass,

and the flower of the field, here to-day, and gone to-morrow; and what if he meets with a rub or two, some stinging calamity, yet the shortness of life secures him. The nettle can stand no longer than the grass. Let him hug himself in this thought, that he is a traveller, hasting through bad ways: his afflictions keep pace with his life; he runs the gauntlet; he does not stand still while he is struck. Disgrace, poverty, and death, those dreadful things to mortality, they are themselves but mortal. The blackest line shall have a period. Wherefore, since the shortness of our affliction is just matter of refreshment, let us not make the affliction itself an argument of terror.

2. They are not to be feared, because they do not take away any thing from a man's proper perfections: for is any thing of the solid worth of his mind diminished, because his estate is impaired? Is a man at all the worse for this or that unjust disgrace? Is his skin ever the fouler, because a spot is fallen upon his clothes? or is it any shame to die? These things cannot reach the soul, where all a man's worth and happiness is treasured. As honour is in honourance, in him that honours rather than in him that is honoured; so disgrace is in him that casts it, not in him that endures it. Our Saviour says, that "meats and drinks cannot defile a man, because they are received into him, and pass through him;" so the injuries and disgraces of this world cannot hurt us, because they pass over us. And what I instance in this particular of disgrace, may be applied to all other calamities. But now sin and guilt, they are in the soul, and the wrath of God, that sinks into the soul, as oil into the bones; therefore they destroy it, and consequently ought to be feared. But miseries and afflictions hurt not the soul, as being without it: they are like storms and hail rattling upon the outside of the house, not at all felt, and therefore not to be feared by those that are within. We ought to fear nothing, but that which can rob us of the happiness and perfection of our being, which is the conformity of our nature to God, and God has placed this out of the reach of man; it is intrusted in the keeping of the will, which is not to be forced by any outward compulsion. It is sin only, and the wrath of God for sin, that can bereave us of this. In the midst of chains, and prisons, and bonds, a man's will is free. In the midst of all Job's miseries, he may, with Job, keep his integrity; and hitherto he is a happy man. But sin enslaves; sin will bring him below the dung-hill. The Stoics, being sensible that the perfection of a man was only in the virtuous disposition of his soul, which they called wisdom, held a wise man to be so far unconcerned in all the miseries of this life, that he might sing in Phalaris's bull, laugh upon the rack, smile upon a tyrant; because all these evils could not destroy the virtue of the soul, and therefore not the happiness of the soul. And certainly much happier is a conscientious Stephen amongst the stones, and

a martyr in the flames, than an epicure upon a bed of roses. And shall a Christian droop under the fear of those evils, when a philosopher could sing under the endurance of them? Our fears, indeed, at present, are correspondent to our apprehensions; and so much are we led by sense, that we can now hardly apprehend any thing to be misery, but that which is pain. But certainly, the day of the Lord will reveal it to be far otherwise; there will be more sting and venom in sin, than ever we found in affliction: then we shall see, that when we were afraid of the greatest cruelty of man, we feared where no fear was; and when we engaged without fear in a way of sin, we ventured upon the very mouth of hell and destruction. Let no religious person, therefore, fear the threats or fury of men, as long as his innocence is in his own keeping, his darling out of the power of the dog. The archers of a wicked generation may shoot at him, and sorely grieve and hate him, as they did righteous Joseph; "but his bow shall abide in strength, and his arms be made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." All the force, the rage, the spite of a wicked world, cannot force him to sin; and, therefore, cannot force him to be miserable.

3. The evils that men inflict are not to be feared, because in all these they are limited by God's overruling hand. "The Lord reigns, though the earth be never so unquiet."

In those very actions that oppose God and his glory, God has a commanding hand. The devil himself could not go the least beyond God's prescriptions, in his vexing Job. The devil, not only in his punishments, but in his actions, is held in chains. All the miseries we so fear, are entirely in God's disposal. He holds the stars in his hand, as well in respect of their malignant as their propitious influences. All the great ones of the world are only God's sword-bearers; and because they bear the sword, we cannot hence conclude, that they have the power and use of the sword. How should this allay our fears and compose our jealousies, since our greatest enemies can do no more than what our best friend permits! A child is no more afraid when he sees a sword, than when he sees a staff, in his father's hand. Be it a mercy, or be it a judgment, why should we trouble ourselves? it is in God's management. This was an abundant satisfaction to David, that "his times were in God's hands," Psalm xxxi. 15. All his concernments, whether in prosperity or adversity, his persecution from house and home, as well as his advancement to a kingdom, they were all in God's ordering. The wicked are said to be God's rod, Isaiah x. 5: they cannot strike a blow, but as managed by his arm. A weapon that is in nobody's hand cannot strike; and that which is in a friend's hand cannot hurt. "Thou didst it, therefore I kept silence," says David, Psalm xxxix. 9. It is an argument sufficient not only to silence our murmurings, but our complaints; not only to convince our

reasons, but to confute our fears; it is God that does it. He says to this affliction, Go, and it goes; to this enemy, Persecute, and he persecutes; to another, Kill, and he kills: all attend the nod of his sovereignty. He holds the winds in his fists; he lets them fly into a storm, and again crushes them into a calm as he pleases. This, therefore, is an argument of solid comfort, that in all the miseries we endure from our enemies, God is the chief actor; whose power is able to control their force, and his goodness to overrule their malice. There can be no cause in the sharpest torments to complain of cruelty, while we are under the hand of the surgeon; but especially if our father be the surgeon. So that this is a third reason to allay our fears of all miseries that may be inflicted by men, because they are overruled by the omnipotent arm of a merciful God.

4. The good that may be extracted out of such miseries as are inflicted by men, is often greater than the evil that is endured in them; therefore, they are not to be feared, but rather prudently to be managed. The evil that is in them, can only affect the body; but the good of them may really benefit the soul. We know vipers afford materials for the best medicines, as well as the strongest poison; and therefore as they are avoided by the fearful passenger, so they are sought for by the skilful physician. There is a spiritual Christianity, by which a soul may extract such an elixir out of worldly crosses, bring such a sight out of darkness, that they may prove greater comforts than ever they were troubles. I could instance in every particular calamity; but I shall pitch only upon one, which is virtually all, and that is death. Let us here rank the evils of it on one side, and the good of it on the other; and then see whether it may more deservedly exercise our fears, or incite our joys. Death puts a divorce between thy soul and thy body: yes, but it also separates between thy soul and thy sins. It snatches thee out of this world; but it translates thee into a better. It takes thee from converse with men; but then it lodges thee in the society of angels. It bereaves thee of the pleasures of life; but it also frees thee from the troubles of life. The emolument of it does so far overbalance the evil of it, that a Christian may, with much resolution, defy any persecutor; and, instead of trembling under the fear of death, triumphantly cry out with Paul, "For me to die is gain."

5. The fear of these evils seldom prevents them before they come, and never lessens them when they are come; therefore it is irrational. You must remember, according to the premised distinctions, that I speak of a solicitous anxious fear; such a one as is, for the most part, attended with a distrust of providence. Fear is a passion designed by nature for the avoidance of evil; and where it does not enable us to avoid it, but rather augments it, there it is absurd. Continual fear of a calamity before it

comes, will exhaust our strength and spirits so far, as to disenable us to grapple with it when it is come. And this is all we gain by such fear; the burden of an affliction is still the same, and our ability to endure it is made less. As our Saviour said, "Can any of us, by taking thought, add one cubit to his stature?" so I may say, can any one, by his solicitous fears, diminish ought from the malice of men, alleviate the pangs of death, or wipe off a reproach? Nay, it oftentimes betrays us into all these evils. *Mors et fugacem persequitur virum*, says the poet. He that trembles at the very sight of his burden, with what courage will he be able to stand under it? Can the trembling of the lamb keep off or mitigate the rage of the wolf? He that continually torments himself with the fear of an approaching evil, does anticipate his misery, not avoid it. Every strong apprehension of an object is a certain approximation of it to the soul. Fear makes the evil that is feared present to a man, in respect of its trouble, before it can be present in respect of its existence; wherefore it is so far from keeping off a calamity, that it brings it before its time. When Sennacherib approached to Jerusalem with a dreadful army, we read in Isaiah xxxvi., xxxvii., that Hezekiah was amazed, and rent his clothes, and the people trembled. But was it their trembling that kept off the enemy? No; it was not Hezekiah's fear of his enemy, but his confidence in his God, that did protect him. Thus we see it avails nothing to keep off a calamity. But will it diminish it when it is actually upon us? No, says Job: "the evil that I feared has come upon me," Job iii. 25. Job's antecedent fear did not at all lighten his present misery. And thus I have shown the absurdity of this fear, which is a sufficient reason against it; and certainly, that which is so notoriously contrary to reason, cannot have any agreement with religion.

6. These evils are not to be feared, because the all-knowing God, who knows the utmost of them better than men or angels, has pronounced them not to be feared. And certainly we may well venture our lives upon his word, upon which we venture our souls. God is too knowing to be ignorant of the utmost of these things, and too faithful to conceal what he knows. He that made the bow, knows how far it will carry. He that tempered the faculties and powers of man, knows that he did it with such an equality, that one man cannot do more than another can endure. We have God's word for it, that the tormentors of the body cannot hurt us; and should not this take off all pretence of fear? When our physician tells us that we may venture upon such or such a dish, we may do it with safety and confidence. Hear what encouragement God speaks in the most discouraging cases: Isaiah vii., two mighty kings invade Ahaz; so that it is said in the second verse, that "his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." For what, in all likelihood,

could be expected from fury joined with force, but certain ruin and desolation, bloodshed and captivity? Yet God says, in the fourth verse, "Fear not, neither be faint-hearted." And the reason of it is at hand; for God could easily either divert these evils, as he did, or at least easily enable him to endure them. In Isaiah xliii. 1, 2, God says to Israel, "Fear not: when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Fire and water are the most dreadful elements; but God bids his children "fear not," while they are in the very jaws of these: for he is able to extinguish them, or at least to suspend their force: as he did when the Israelites passed through the seas; and when Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-nego, were cast into the fire. In St. James, ch. i. 2, the Spirit bids us "count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations." By temptations is meant the miseries and tribulations of the world. These things are so far from being just arguments of our fear, that, in God's esteem, they are real matter of our joy. Now there is no exception that can, with any colour, be framed against the reports that God himself shall make of any thing. Shall we, then, continue to multiply our fears of these evils, when we have the verdict of truth itself, that they are not to be regarded? when we have his testimony, who is too discerning of the nature of all things to be deceived, and too true to deceive? Now, when we have the deposition of an exact knowledge, joined with an infinite truth, we cannot, in reason, suspend our belief; and if we entertain a belief of these things, we cannot reasonably retain our fears.

7. The greatest of these evils have been endured, and that without fear or astonishment; and therefore they ought not to be feared. This is a maxim of a sure and never-failing verity: *Ab actu ad potentiam valet consequentia:* that which has actually been endured, may be endured. Experience is, for the most part, a convincing, but it is always a confirming argument. Examples ought to animate us. Many will venture upon some dangers, which before they avoided, after once they have seen somebody wade through them. Leaders in an army are not only for the direction, but also for the encouragement of those that follow. Let us take a survey of some examples; and first, we shall find some heathens, who, though they were not helped by grace, yet by a bare principle of moral honesty were lifted above the terrors of men. Regulus, rather than falsify his promise, could, with an undaunted courage, endure the barbarous cruelty of the Carthaginians. Socrates, rather than conceal a known truth, could, with much alacrity, suffer an ignominious death. And certainly these examples should make us courageous in the endurement of all worldly misery, if not out of religion, yet at

least out of shame. But now, for those that have been elevated by a higher spirit, by a principle of Christianity, I could produce you multitudes, troops of martyrs: some triumphing at the stake; some with joy embracing the gibbet; some cheerfully enduring those torments, that others could scarce conceive but with terror. I could instance in those three slighting the furnace, and the rage of an incensed tyrant, Dan. iii. 18. In Stephen patiently enduring a barbarous death, Acts vii. In Paul enduring almost all that could be endured, 2 Cor. xi. 23—26, &c. The history of his life is the history of his troubles. Now that Spirit, which enabled these heroes to conquer the fear of such miseries, is also ready to enable us. As God calls us to the same duty, so he will afford us the same assistance. Methinks there should be that magnanimity in every Christian, that he should scorn to be outbraved by any in point of spiritual fortitude; and to make that noble resolution that Nehemiah did, in ch. vi. 11, "Should such a man as I flee?" I, who have the armour of God, the helmet of faith, the breast-plate of righteousness, and the Spirit to be my second, should such a one as I fear? especially when so many have gone before me, both with courage and success? I confess, that is a piece of daring valour, to encounter a new unknown calamity; but examples and precedents take off from the dread of the greatest misery. And therefore we must know, that although a Christian's way through these calamities be a strait and narrow way, and so consequently troublesome; yet it is a beaten, trodden way, and therefore not terrible.

And thus much for the first thing, to show what are those considerations that ought to lessen our fears of these worldly evils: I proceed now to

II. The second thing; to show *what is implied in the destruction of the body and soul in hell, which makes it so formidable.*

To demonstrate this, I could here enlarge upon several considerations, which, because vulgar, I shall not insist upon. As first, in opposition to the momentary duration of earthly torments, I could oppose the eternity of damnation; which is set forth in scripture by the grimmest representations that can be, by "the worm that never dies," Mark ix. 44. Worms are the effects and signs of mortality; but this worm is the token of a miserable eternity. It is also expressed by fire that is never quenched, in Rev. xiv. 11, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Who can think of eternity, but with horror? who can fancy a perpetuity, but with amazement? All the fear that nature has, is not sufficient to bestow upon such an object. An endless torment it is, such a thing as a man can scarce wield or master in his thoughts. Eternity is that which would make any thing but the enjoyment of God a misery; for

since the mind of man is refreshed with variety, what pleasure is there that a perpetual enjoyment would not make loathsome? How dismal then must it needs be, when a perpetuity concurs with a torment! I could here further illustrate the greatness of this misery, from the quality of the torments: and that first, for their positive part; they are so exquisite, so intense, that neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the greatness of them. Every faculty and power of the soul shall be then filled with God's wrath. We have read, that some have endured the greatest bodily torments without shrinking, without a tear: but there shall be no soul so sturdy, as to be able to endure the torments of hell without eternal weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. If the damned could now and then for a while shift their torments for the greatest that man can inflict, those changes would be so many recreations, so many lucid intervals; such an unspeakable difference is there between these miseries, and those that they shall then endure. I could further show the greatness of this punishment from the privative part, to wit, the total deprivation of God's presence, which presence would be able to turn a hell into a heaven, as the want of it would make a heaven become a real hell. The lost, undone sinner, shall be then eternally divorced from the embraces of his God: not one act of mercy, not one smile of his countenance to be enjoyed for ever; no company to be had, but those that weep under the same miseries, and the company of their cruel implacable tormentors, who shall execute the wrath of God upon them, for those very sins which they tempted them to; and in the midst of these endless flames, not one drop of water to alleviate the rage of them, to relieve the tongue of a distressed Dives. The miseries of hell are yet further set out in scripture by that which, of all other evils, is the most grievous to the nature of man; and that is, shame and contempt: Dan. xii. 2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." From these, and many other considerations, I could set forth the infinite misery of a condemned estate; but instead of exercising our inventions in describing these miseries, we should do well to exercise our wisdom in avoiding them.

But to pass by these considerations, there is one, I think, that gives weight and a sting to all the rest, and chiefly renders the destruction of the body and soul terrible; and it is this, because the destroying of the body and soul in hell is the utmost that the almighty God can do to a sinner. This is apparent from the opposition that is between the former and the latter part of the verse; for the killing of the body, which is there mentioned as the utmost that men can do, is opposed to the destroying of the body and soul, which from thence is intimated to be the utmost

that God can do. Now when an omnipotence shall do its worst; when God shall rally up all the strength that an almighty power is able to inflict, who shall be able to stand under those strokes? Where there is no limitation of the power of him that punishes, there can be no end of the punishment. It is not an earthly judge, a king, a tyrant, but it is a God we are to contest withal: they are not courts, nor armies, but an infinite power that will attack us. All the ingredients that make a thing terrible are wrapped up in this one consideration: for first, here is an irresistible force, and then this irresistible force is fired with an implacable anger, both of which are to encounter the greatest weakness joined with the greatest guilt: and when a weak and guilty soul is to deal with an omnipotent angry God, what is to be expected but the extremity of torment? What thought is able to reach the depth of this misery! When the living God shall cease to be God, then such a soul shall cease to be miserable.

But when I say, that the destroying of the body and soul in hell is the utmost that God can do, it may be objected, that a total annihilation of its being would be a greater punishment, and a work that carries in it a greater evidence of God's power; for it argues a Deity more, to reduce an immortal soul to nothing, than of happy to make it miserable.

To this I answer, that although annihilation argues a greater power, or (to speak more properly) is a greater argument of power, than to render a thing miserable, yet it is not so great a punishment: for punishment is properly the inflicting of the evil of pain, for the evil of sin. But now, after annihilation, there remains no being; and where there is no being, there can be no pain; and where there is no pain, there can be no punishment. It is clear therefore, that although the reduction of a being to a nonentity be the certain result of an infinite power; yet the reducing it to an eternal misery is much the greater penalty. God will, as I may so speak, with one hand hold the soul in life and being, that he may smite it with the other: and that he may exercise his justice in punishing the sinner, he will exert his power in preserving him.

But it may be here further objected, that even in respect of the greatest of the punishment, to annihilate a soul is much more grievous, and consequently a severer punishment, than only to make it eternally miserable. For to be miserable, is only a diminution of being: but to be annihilated, implies a total privation of it. Now since the nature of God is not only the fountain, but also the standard of happiness, by which all created happiness is to be measured; according to our nearness to which perfection, or our distance from it, we are said to be happy or miserable: it is clear, that there is a greater distance between God and no being, than between God and a miserable being. Wherefore it

is a greater punishment to be brought to nothing, than to be brought to misery.

In answer to this, I confess, that this argument seems metaphysically to conclude. But as to the matter in hand, I shall first oppose our Saviour's words, which ought to have greater weight with us than all the arguments in the world; who in Matt. xxvi. 24, speaking concerning the damnation of Judas, says, that "it had been good for him never to have been born;" which words St. Hierome so interprets, *Simpliciter dictum est, melius esse non subsistere, quam malè subsistere.* From whence it is clear, that our Saviour judged it much better not to be at all, than to be eternally miserable. And next to our Saviour's, I could add the judgment of Solomon, Eccles. iv. 1, 2, 3. If Solomon could esteem it better of the two not to have been at all, than to have endured the miseries of this world: how much more did he prefer it before the endurement of those eternal miseries of the world to come!

But, in the second place, this maxim, upon which the argument is grounded, to wit, that the degree of diminution is better than the degree of privation; better to be miserable than not to be at all; does not always hold true, but admits of many exceptions (as a learned author of our own observes). And one exception is, when the degree of diminution is more sensitive than the degree of privation. So that this answer falls in with the former: because to be miserable infers a greater pain and grief than simply not to be; therefore it is also the greater punishment, because the nature of punishments consists in the endurement of pain.

And thus I have finished the doctrinal part, wherein I have endeavoured to show what it is that may render the greatest miseries that men can bring upon us contemptible, and what it is that represents the destruction of the body and soul so dreadful. I shall now proceed to the

Application.

Though the words themselves are an exhortation, and so their own use, yet, to bring you fuller home, I shall repeat the exhortation in one word of serious advice; that when any one is discouraged from duty, or tempted to sin, by any man, or any thing that is in the power of man, (as who is not some time or other?) he would on this side conscientiously ponder man's inability, and on the other God's infinite power to destroy. Shall the frowns of a poor weak man like ourselves, terrify us from duty more than the anger of the almighty God command us to it? Shall the fear of racks or gibbets more forcibly drive us into the commission of sin, than the thoughts of the never-dying worm and the unquenchable fire keep us from it? Is the sword or prison more terrible than rivers of brimstone kindled by the breath of a sin-revenging God? Is a few days' sorrow more

dreadful than eternal weepings and wailings? The command lies before us; man says, Break it, or we die? God says, Perform it, or we die eternally. Let us consult, not so much our religion, as our reason; and then fear that which our reason shall tell us is most to be feared. Man compared with God is not only not terrible, but very contemptible; it is not his strength, but our weakness that makes him dreadful. Take him at his best, he had always more infirmity than authority: nay, the greatest and most potent monarch upon earth does not owe so much to his own power, as to his subjects' fear, that he is obeyed. But now God, upon the best terms of reason, may challenge our fears: for as an all-sufficiency is the only rational foundation of our hopes, as being that alone which is able to answer all our wants and desires; so an omnipotence is the only rational ground of our fear, as being that alone which is able to destroy our eternal happiness. How many duties have been neglected, how many hideous and vile actions committed, because men have not kept fresh upon their spirits a due apprehension of these things! Is not this the natural language of most hearts?—Should I perform such a strict duty, I should be derided. Should I bear testimony to such a truth, I should offend such a great one. Should I testify to such a one's face of the vanity of his conversation, and the profaneness and frothiness of his discourse, I should disoblige him for ever: I dare not do it. Dare not do it? Then let such a one renounce his Christianity, but much more the ministry, or dare to be good when God commands, *temporibusque malis ausus es esse bonus.* The very heathen poet could make it the greatest and the surest test of sincerity to embrace virtue in the midst of discouragements; but for a soul to be prevailed upon by the terrors and persuasions of man, to slight the precepts and threatenings of the great God, what is this but, like that absurd Balaam, to run after the invitation of a mortal king, while God himself stands in the way with a drawn sword to oppose him. "He that denies me before men," says Christ; that is, he that is afraid to own me and my ways, according to the strictness of them, in the midst of all the discouragements of the world, "him will I also deny before my Father in heaven," Matt. x. 33. He that fears the face of man, shall never with any comfort behold the face of God. Shall I draw forth this case in some instances, by which it shall appear that a due apprehension of the terrors of the Lord, above the terrors of men, has been a preservative against the commission of many sins; and, on the contrary, that a fearing of man more than God has been a cause of the foulest rebellions?

(1.) For instances of the first sort, it was a full persuasion of the power of God to destroy beyond the power of the greatest men, that kept Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-nego from idolatry; that made them own the cause of God in spite of a furnace, in Dan. iii., which I have already mentioned. It was this that kept

Joseph from that foul sin of adultery; for without question the solicitations of his mistress were seasoned with threatenings as well as entreaties. But he had his answer ready: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. Here I am threatened with false reproaches if I refuse to sin: but, on the other hand, God threatens me with eternal miseries, if I do commit it. Here indeed there is a dungeon, but there is a pit from whence there is no recovery. It was this also that caused the apostles to go on preaching the gospel in spite of all persecution; and to answer all the threatenings of men in power, hindering the propagation of it, with this short but pious resolution, Acts v. 29, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

(2.) We shall see how the entertaining of a greater fear of men than of God was the cause of many notorious sins. It was this that caused Saul to neglect the command of God in destroying Amalek, to the ruin of his person, and the loss of his kingdom. For in his confession he resolves his sin into the fear of man, as the cause of it, 1 Sam. xv. 24: "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words; because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." It was a sinful fear of men that caused the father of the faithful, even Abraham himself, to stain his conscience with an equivocation little less than a lie, Gen. xx. 2. It was this that caused David to take that indirect, sinful, unbecoming course for his security, to feign himself mad, 1 Sam. xxi. 13. And last of all, it was the fear of the Jews that plunged Peter into that woeful sin of a treble denial of his master, which afterwards cost him so many bitter sighs and tears, Matt. xxvi. I could add many other examples; but since it appears sufficiently from these, how dangerous it is to fear those who can only kill the body, and in the mean time to neglect him that is able to destroy the soul: let us press that to our own hearts, that Nehemiah did to the nobles of Judah, when they were engaged in the work of the Lord, and much affronted and discouraged by men, in Neh. iv. 14: "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord which is great and terrible."

2. I proceed to a second use; where, from the qualification of those persons to whom this exhortation was addressed, who were Christ's disciples, eleven of which were saints of God, secure as to their eternal [condition], such as were so kept by Christ, as that they could not be lost, John xvii. 12, we thence gather a use of information, that it is not absurd to give cautions and admonitions for the avoiding eternal death, even to those whose salvation is sure, and sealed up in the purpose of God. This is the great argument of those who are enemies to the absolute decree of God's election, and the certain perseverance of the saints; for, say they, to what purpose do we bid those fear him that is able to destroy their bodies and souls in hell, who are sure never to

come to hell? But this exception is not so considerable: for first, though they are sure never to come to hell, by reason of God's decree, yet they do not always know so much, and men's fears follow their knowledge and apprehensions. Secondly, by these cautions and admonitions this certainty of salvation is partly procured. If, indeed, we did assert such a certainty of their salvation as did not depend upon the use of means; then, indeed, this exception of theirs,—Why should we use the means? why should we give cautions and admonitions against hell?—would conclude something. But since we affirm such a certainty of salvation as depends upon, and takes in the use of such means, this argument signifies little.

3. This speaks reproof to that slavish sort of sinners who are men-pleasers. Flattery of men always carries with it a distrust or a neglect of God. If to fear men be prohibited by God, then a servile pleasing of them must be equally hateful to him; forasmuch as this arises from fear. It is the most degenerous and pusillanimous temper of mind that can be. It is ignoble, as thou art a man, and irreligious, as thou art a Christian. Canst thou prostitute an immortal soul to the feeding of the ambition or revenge of a sinful man, like thyself, by a servile admiration of his person, and a false accusation of others? How will it upbraid thee with thy former flatteries, and thy fears, to see the person now so adored by thee, one day as naked and obnoxious before God's tribunal as thyself, and perhaps answering for many of those injuries that he did to thee? It is to debase thyself, and to betray the privilege and dignity of thy soul, to flatter or fear any man. There is a spiritual grandeur that God would have every soul maintain; and it is below a man to adore or cringe to any thing but his Maker. To this intent, it is the design of the Spirit, throughout the whole scripture, to stain the glory of men with the most undervaluing expressions. "Cease from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Isaiah ii. 22. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob," Isaiah xli. 14. The life of man is said to be as a vapour, James iv. 14; and certainly, if his life is a vapour, his power cannot be considerable. What is that which the man, whom thou so adorest, can do for thee? Why, he may, perhaps, gratify thee with some puny gain or preferment. But is he able to speak that comfort to thee that arises from the conscience of a good action? Can he deliver thee from the hand of thy enemies, when God shall deliver thee into it? or can he cause thee to fall under thy enemies, when God shall rescue thee from them? If not, then adore and please him who is able to do these things. Conscientiously pursue that course of life which God has placed thee in, and trust thy concernments with Providence: disdain to step a foot out of it, to gather up the inconsiderable straws of human favours or preferments. The God whom thou servest is able to advance thee.

And remember this exhortation, which, with a little change of the words, makes for the purpose: Please not them who are only able to advance the body, but cannot in the least benefit the soul; but rather make it thy care and business to please him who is able, with eternal bliss, to advance both body and soul in heaven.

To whom, therefore, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XXV.

ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

Hebrews ii. 16.

For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

If we reflect upon the state of the world before the coming of Christ, we shall find, that a long and a dark night of ignorance had overspread almost the whole universe for about the space of four thousand years before God was pleased to permit this great Sun of righteousness to arise upon it. The improvements of their reason were but mean, but their religion scandalous: the most advanced results of both, amounting to no more but this; that they did, or at least might, by the force of natural reason, know that there was a God: and knowing him to be God, they could not but know him also to be infinitely wise, powerful, just, holy, and the like. Upon the knowledge of this (as it is easy to glance from one contrary to the other) they could not but consequentially know themselves to be impure, unjust, and unholy. And being so, whether upon the stock of nature or tradition, they could proceed to collect further, that this holy God would be concerned to punish them for not being so too: and in case he should, whether yet he would not accept of some other thing as vicarious, to bear the blow of divine justice due to themselves; I say, whether they gathered this from the conclusions of reason, or the reports of tradition, certain it is, that this persuasion put the world upon sacrifices, as the great propitiations of a Deity, and arts of recompence to an offended justice.

This was then the sum of their religion, for them to sin, and the poor beast to die; for the man to do like a beast, and the beast to suffer for the man. Nay, it improved even to homicide; and to offer up "the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul" was a sublime satisfaction. To expiate impiety by inhumanity, to kill the innocent, as it were, to get his innocence; to let others' blood for our distempers; this was all the religion of a world acted by the dictates of ignorance, and the overruling fallacy of a brutish inveterate custom.

It was now time for God to commiserate the absurd and soul-ruining devotions of a besotted world; and for Christ to step forth and declare, that such "sacrifice and burnt-offerings God would not, and therefore that a body was to be prepared for himself."

Hereupon, to rescue the deluded sons of men from their sins, and, what was much more sinful, from their religion; as the reserve of Providence, as the inheritance of the last ages; as it were to credit the concluding scene and last going off of the world, in the fulness of time, Christ was born, and sent by his Father, to be the great mediator and instructor of mankind; both to discourage and to expiate sin, and to teach the world the worship of their Maker.

And all this he was to effect by the strongest methods and most miraculous condescensions to our likeness, by being "God manifested," or rather *hidden* "in the flesh;" clothing his divine nature with all the frailties of the human, suppressing his glories, and in a word, by taking upon him the seed of Abraham.

As for the words that I have here pitched upon, it must be confessed that the translation represents them very different from what they are in the original, which runs thus, Οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἐπιλαμβάνεται τοὺς ἀγγέλους. Where we find that what we render by the preter tense, *he took*, the original has by the present, *he takes:* and what we render "the nature of angels," the original has only τοὺς ἀγγέλους, *angels.* Neither is it clear that *to take on him*, or *to assume*, is the genuine signification of ἐπιλαμβάνεται. This text indeed is generally used by divines, ancient and modern, to prove Christ's incarnation, or assuming the human nature: notwithstanding that this word ἐπιλαμβάνεται (as Camero well observes) is no where else in scripture taken in this sense. St. Paul uses it in 1 Tim. vi. 19, but with him there it signifies *to apprehend, to attain, or compass a thing.* But its chief signification, and which seems most suitable to this place, is *to rescue and deliver*, it being taken from the usual manner of rescuing a thing: namely, by catching hold of it, and so forcibly wringing it from the adversary. As David, when he rescued the lamb from the bear and the lion's mouth, might be properly said ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι. And Grotius observes, that the proper sense of the word is *vindicare seu asserere in libertatem manu injecta.* Though if he will needs have that to be the signification of the word in this place, it may be feared that he does it out of too much favour to a bad hypothesis.

Before we proceed any further therefore, it will, I think, be of moment to settle the right interpretation of the word, and to see whether ἐπιλαμβάνεται may be properly rendered *he takes hold of*, or *delivers*, or *he takes on him*, or *assumes.* That the word will bear both, is certain; and it is also as certain, that if the text be considered in itself, abstracted from what follows, it will properly enough bear the former sense, of *delivering or taking hold of:* according to which, it will run thus; Christ verily does not deliver or redeem angels, but he delivers and redeems the seed of Abraham. Which interpretation surely does not offer any violence to the sense of the text.

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Those who will not allow Christ to have had any existence antecedent to his conception, nor a divine nature, which did afterwards assume the human, are earnest for this interpretation, utterly excluding and rejecting the other. I have already granted, that the words thus rendered, contain in them a truth; but then we must remember, that every true proposition drawn out of a text, is not therefore the true interpretation of it. The fathers generally take ἐπιλαμβάνεται in the sense in which it is here translated; namely, *he assumed*, or "took on him the seed of Abraham." And besides the influence that antiquity and general consent ought deservedly to have upon us in expounding scripture, I conceive, that there are not wanting also solid arguments to evince, that this is the proper sense of the word, as it is here used, and not the other.

For the proving of which, I shall premise this one note, which indeed is clear of itself from the very illative particle *therefore*, that this and the following verse are so joined together, as to make up one argument; of which argument this verse is the antecedent, and the other the consequent, or inference drawn from it.

Upon this consideration, I thus argue:

1. If in this verse is not signified Christ's taking on him our nature, how comes it to pass, that in the next verse, which has an illative dependence upon this, "the seed of Abraham" are called "his *brethren?*" for his being their deliverer only would not make them his brethren; but "his taking of our nature" properly does. According to which, the argument proceeds fully thus: That since Christ was pleased, by assuming our nature, to be our brother, it became him to be like his brethren in all the circumstances of that nature.

2. In the following verse, which is argumentatively inferred from this, the thing designed to be proved is Christ's priesthood; but his being barely a deliverer is not a proper specific medium to infer that; whereas his assuming of our nature is: forasmuch as a priest is to have a cognation or conjunction of nature with those for whom he is to offer sacrifices. For none but a man can be a *priest* to offer for men.

3. In the 14th verse of this chapter, the apostle had already expressed the very same thing here contended for, in these words: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, *he* also himself took part of the same." So that it is probable, that the apostle is here still pursuing the same subject, namely, Christ's incarnation, or investing of himself with the human nature. And therefore I cannot see what advantage it could be to any, to rend away this interpretation from the 17th verse, when the same sense is so clear and resplendent in the former verse, that it sets it above the attempts of any, either to pervert the meaning, or to evade the force of it.

Having thus given an exposition of the words, I shall cast the prosecution of them into these particulars.

I. To show what is naturally inferred from Christ's "taking on him the seed of Abraham."

II. To show why Christ took on him this, rather than "the nature of angels."

I. For the first of these, there are four things that follow, and are inferred upon it.

1. As first, the divine nature of Christ is unavoidably consequent from hence. There are those who assert Christ to be a mere creature, and not at all to have existed before his conception in the womb of the blessed Virgin: to cut asunder which blasphemous assertion, I need use no other argument than this; If Christ took upon him the seed of Abraham, or the human nature, then he had a being antecedent to the taking upon him this nature. The consequence is proved thus: Every action proceeds from some being or nature that does exist; but to assume the human nature is an action, and that not the action of the nature assumed: therefore it must be the action of some nature that did exist before. That this act of assumption could not be the action of the human nature, is evident; because in transient actions, the same thing cannot be the agent and the object, in reference to the same action. And therefore since the act of assuming did terminate in the human nature, as the thing assumed, it could not issue from the same human nature as the agent assuming.

This argumentation is clear and undeniable, that Christ's taking upon him the human *nature*, infers, that he did it by virtue of a *nature* pre-existent to that, which since it was not the nature of angels (as is here expressly denied) it follows, that it was a divine nature.

And truly, those who confess Christ the Saviour of the world, but allow him not this, make him a Saviour without a power to save. This is a work to be carried on against enemies and oppositions insuperable by any thing under a deity. Nothing can conquer and break asunder the bars of sin and death but the arms of omnipotence: the devil could not be his captive, had he not been his creature.

No conquest to be had over the strong man, but by a stronger; and nothing stronger than the angelic nature, but the divine. The strength of sin is the law; and no strength can master the law, but that strength which made it. He must command the gates of heaven, who lets sinners into it: otherwise, the seed of Abraham may be like the stars, indeed, for number, but not for place.

2. Upon the same ground is inferred the reality of Christ's human nature. This certainly is so evident, that one would

think it uncapable of being denied: but between the contrariety of error, and the clashings of heretics, Christ shall be allowed to be neither God nor man. Incredibly strange and ridiculous, and even monstrous, are the several opinions of heretics, concerning this matter. The Marcionites and the Valentinians affirmed, that Christ had no real, but an imaginary aërial celestial body; and that he appeared only under the external form and shape of a man, but was never really united to man's nature. But this fancy is irrefragably refuted by this, that Christ is said so to have taken upon him the nature of men, as not of angels; but that Christ, under the Old Testament, frequently appeared to the Patriarchs as an angel, has been always held by the church. From whence it follows, that he took upon him the human nature, in a way much beyond a bare appearance under it; forasmuch as thus he might be said to have taken upon him the nature of angels, under which, heretofore, he appeared so often.

The same Valentinians also, together with the Apollinarians, affirmed that Christ received not his body from the blessed Virgin, but brought it with him from heaven. But how then could he have been said to have "taken upon him the seed of Abraham," since he could not do it any otherwise, but by descending from Abraham, according to the flesh? nor could he pretend to any such descent from him, but as he was the natural son of Mary.

Others, as the Arians and the Eunomians, admitting that Christ took on him a real human body, yet denied that he took on him a human soul; asserting that his divine nature supplied the functions of that. But upon this supposition, with what show of reason can it be affirmed that he took upon him our nature, since the human nature is adequately compounded and made up of body and soul, as its two essential constituent parts: so that a body is no more a man's nature, without the concomitance of a rational soul, than a carcass is a man; or that two units can make up a perfect number of four.

Others, as the heretics of Armenia, affirmed that the body Christ had from his mother Mary, was absolutely impassible; uncapable of suffering, or being injured by any external impression. Which, as it is a bold and absurd falsity, confuted by the whole history of Christ's life, which was nothing else but a series of sufferings; so it is particularly dashed in Heb. iv. 15, where it is said, "that he was tempted like unto us in all things, sin only excepted." And in Hebrews ii. 17, 18, it is eminently affirmed, that he "was made like unto his brethren, for this very cause, that he might suffer, and by his sufferings become a merciful high-priest."

He took not only the privileges, the excellencies, and perfections of the human nature upon him, though these had been degradations enough to him, who was the express image of his

Father's brightness; but he clothed himself with all its weaknesses and infirmities, bowed down his glories to the limited meanness of our faculties, to the poorness and affliction of our appetites: he hungered, and thirsted, and was weary; lay open to all the stings of grief, and the invasions of pain. So that, whatsoever the boldness or ignorance of heresy may affirm of him, by all the instances of a sad experience he found himself to be really a man.

3. The third thing deducible from the same ground, is the truth of his office, and the divinity of his mission. For, by thus being of the seed of Abraham, he gave one grand evidence that he was the promised Messiah: forasmuch as from the loins of Abraham was to issue this universal blessing, the desire of the nations, and the centre of all the promises and prophecies, uniting all the remote and scattered predictions in himself.

Now, as the thing that fulfils the prophecy proves the truth of it, so the prophecy mutually confirms and proves the truth of the thing that fulfils it. And, therefore, as the old prophecies, finding an exact completion in Christ, yield an invincible argument against all atheists (Machiavel himself confessing an utter impotence to resolve the problem of the prophecies, without allowing a Deity); so Christ's giving an event to them, undeniably proves, that he was intended by them, against the Jews. Of whom, in this controversy, we have this vast advantage, that we profess not to prove Jesus Christ to be the Messiah, but by those records and arguments which they have in their own custody; nor to evince the truth of our New Testament, but by mediums drawn from their Old.

For is it imaginable, that all those various prophecies, commenced in such different periods of time, could meet so exactly in Christ by mere accident; and be drawn down through so many generations to a concurrence in his person, only by a lucky hit? Can chance be so uniform, and casualty so certain? This is against the notions of reason, the course of nature, and the voice of experience; and consequently, to any considering mind, incredible, because in itself morally impossible.

4. The fourth and last inference that we shall gather from hence, shall be to discover to us Christ's voluntary choice and design, to assume a condition, here upon earth, low and contemptible. One would have thought, that if he had resolved to be a man, and to choose an alliance to dust and ashes; yet that he would, at least, have been framed out of the best clay, and cast into the noblest mould: but that he might humble himself to the nethermost state of contempt, he chose to descend from the seed of Abraham; who, if we set aside their religious privileges (which yet they enjoyed only, but neither improved nor deserved), were certainly, both upon a moral and political account, the most sordid and degenerate race of men upon the earth.

For, first, to rate them by the reports made of them by the penmen of holy writ, who, being Jews themselves, cannot be supposed to have been partial in transmitting the infamy of their countrymen to posterity; yet, how ugly do they appear, even in their own story! their whole narrative containing nothing but a continued vicissitude of their idolatry, impurity, and rebellion. Who would have thought that men, with the remembrance of such prodigious miracles, and immediate discoveries of the divine power and favour to them in Egypt, new and fresh in their minds, could, as soon as ever Moses had turned his back, deify a golden calf, and debase their reason to such a low and ridiculous instance of idolatry? How were they always murmuring after mercies, and doubting after experience! No sooner had God done one miracle before them, but they doubted whether he could do another. How unworthily did they treat Moses and Aaron, and most of their deliverers! particularly Gideon, after his death deserting threescore of his lawful issue, and giving the kingdom to his base son. How causelessly did they relinquish David, and revolt to Absalom! And then, how ridiculously and meanly did they cringe to him to resume the kingdom! It were infinite to pursue all their baseness. There was scarce a prophet or messenger of God sent to them, but they murdered him: and at length, to consummate and heighten their villany to the utmost, they imbrued their hands in the blood of their long expected, but at length mistaken Messias. And, which yet advances their sottishness, whereas they rejected Christ, notwithstanding that he had done those miracles, that were never done by any before him; yet when several impostors and false messiahs rose up after him, who showed them neither sign nor wonder, except of madness and impudence; yet (as appears out of their own Josephus) they were still acknowledged by a considerable number of followers.

And, to add the judgment of men to matters of fact (of which those that have been mentioned are but very few), there is no nation in the world, almost, but hates and contemns them. As early as the time of Jacob we read, that "they were an abomination to the Egyptians," Gen. xliii. 32. And since, they have been successively loathed by all the great and civilized nations, as the Chaldeans, the Persians, the Grecians. And as for the Romans, no Latin writer ever mentions them, but it is with scorn and contempt: Cicero, Suetonius, Tacitus, Pliny, Lucius Florus, Martial, Juvenal, all have left them branded with a mark of ignominy. And at this very day, how much are they disgusted in all those kingdoms and dominions where they are dispersed! They are like dung upon the face of the earth; and that not so much for their being scattered, as for being so offensive.

Now certainly this may be rationally collected, that it could not be, that all nations, in all ages, should thus conspire in a

detestation of them; but that there was some peculiar vileness essentially fixed in the genius of this people, contrary to those natural and generous principles of morality and converse, which universally possess and act the behaviour of the rest of mankind. Nothing could be more full and expressive than St. Paul's testimony of them, 1 Thess. ii. 15, "They please not God, and are contrary to all men." This is properly the Jewish temper and disposition.

I conclude, therefore, that it is one great instance of Christ's humiliation, that he derived his nativity from this race: so that the prophet Isaiah might justly say, that he should "spring up as a plant out of a dry ground." As one that had drained all the worth and goodness of that nation into himself; which made those who lived both before and after him to have so little of it. He appeared amongst them, like a single star in a dark night; or, indeed as a sun: and that not so much shining upon, as rather shining out of a dunghill.

II. I come now to the other general thing, proposed for the handling of the words, namely, *to show why Christ took upon him the nature of man, and not of angels.*

In things that are the immediate results of the divine will, it is a bold venture to search into the causes of them; and when we speak either of God or of the king, to assign an antecedent reason of their actions, and to be peremptory in alleging why they should do this or this.

The divine will is absolute; it is its own reason: it is both the producer and the ground of all its acts. It moves not by the external impulse or inclination of objects, but determines itself by an absolute autocracy.

And, therefore, as to the present inquiry,—why Christ rather assumed the nature of men than that of angels;—it is a full, abundant, and satisfactory answer, that so it seemed fit to the good pleasure of the all-wise God. Yet since God is sometimes pleased, in his transacting with man, to descend some steps from the throne of his majesty, and to bring down his great counsels to the level of our apprehension, so as to submit his actions to be canvassed and cleared, even at the bar of reason itself: it will be found, that there are not wanting arguments to evince the reasonableness and equity of this his proceeding.

The reasons, therefore, why Christ took upon him the nature and the mediatorship of men, and not of angels, may be these two.

1. The transcendent greatness and malignity of the sin of the angels above that of men. What that particular sin was, for which the angels were thrown down from their station, is hard, and perhaps impossible, to be determined; yet men inquire after it as freely, as if it might: and some pitch it upon pride; though,

in their confident asserting of that which is no where delivered, they seem to discover no small pride and arrogance themselves. But whatsoever that sin was (which to determine is not here material) certain it is, that it did much exceed the guilt and provoking qualities of the sin of man; and that in these two respects:

(1.) As being committed against a much greater light, which is to be the proper guide and ruler of the will in all its choices. The light of man's understanding, while innocent, was clear indeed, but small and diminutive, subject to the clouds of fallacy and inadvertency. But the angelical intellect was strong and intuitive, above the reach of those mists and clouds, that the lower region of the human faculties was subject to. Now, proportionable to the means of avoiding sin, is the guilt of falling into it. Man stumbled, and fell under the light and direction of a star; but the angels fell headlong under the light and guidance of a sun: so that no plea, no rational extenuation of their offence could be alleged. Whereas the different nature of man's transgression might afford such grounds to the ratiocinations of divine mercy, as, though they did not excuse man's sin, yet might excite God's compassion.

(2.) The sin of the angels commenced upon a greater liberty of will and freedom of choice. There was no devil to tempt them to become devils; no seducer of a stronger reason to impose upon theirs; they moved entirely upon the motives of an intrinsic malice. But man was circumvented with fallacy, and tempted with importunity: and so great a share of the guilt may be devolved upon the temptation, that it is very possible, that if he had not been tempted, he had not fallen. I confess, there is that inseparable prerogative of absoluteness in the will of every man, that it defies coaction, and cannot be forced by any external impression: for, indeed, if it might, so far it could not be said to sin, no action being sin that is not voluntary.

But then, the vehemence of persuasion, the restlessness of importunity, are great invasions upon this freedom and indifference of the will; and though they cannot wound or impair the faculty itself, yet they much hinder and perplex the actual use and exercise of it: and consequently, though they are not sufficient to acquit the sinner in an ill choice, yet they afford many grains of allowance, make great abatements, and alter the measures of his guilt. Strong and importunate persuasions have not the nature and formality of force; but they have oftentimes the effect of it: and he that solicits earnestly, sometimes determines as certainly as if he did force. The will of man, brought to sin by the tempter, is like a bowl running down a hill: its own weight and figure is, indeed, one cause of the motion; but the hand that threw it is another.

2. The next, and perhaps the grand cause, that induced Christ

to take upon him the nature and mediation of men, and not of angels, might be this; that without such a Redeemer, the whole race and species of mankind had perished, as being all involved in the sin of their representative; whereas, though many of the angels sinned, yet as many, if not more, persisted in their innocence; so that the whole kind was not cashiered by a universal ruin, nor made unserviceable to their Creator, in the nobler instances of active obedience.

Which mankind was, and had so continued, as in that estate; having no other motives to act them, but a horrid despair, and expectation of future torment: the material issue of which could have been nothing but a confirmed malice against God, exerting itself in the lives of men, to the overflowing of the world with an uncontrolled torrent of the highest villanies and enormities.

But now, was it not a proportionable object for the designs of divine mercy to rescue so great and noble a part of the creation from a total perdition? Was it not pity, that so fair a writing should be all dashed, and for ever defaced by one blot? that sin should be able to do so much mischief, and, as it were, to counterwork the divine power and goodness, by lopping off one of the masterpieces of his work at a blow?

This had been more destructive than a deluge; it had been a universal ruin, without the mitigation of any exception. But this is not the genius and way of God's working, who designs particular mercies in the midst of general judgments. Still he has a reserve of favour; and the flood that drowns the world, bears up the ark.

Christ saw us ruined in the loins of our first parents; and it moved his compassion to behold our death, earlier than our nativity. Even amongst men, if a woman with child be condemned, there is yet mercy for the unborn infant; and it extends so far as to reprieve the guilty parent. No wonder then, if the divine mercy was not inferior in the methods of salvation, and if the mercies of a judge did not exceed the compassions of a Saviour.

And now, what can the result and upshot of this whole transaction be, but to quicken, or rather transport us in our returns of gratitude; to advance gratitude into admiration, and admiration into astonishment? Why should the Son of God disrobe himself of his eternal excellencies, to come and wrap himself in dust and ashes, to converse with carcasses, with weakness and mortality, with vile creatures, and viler sinners? and all this to rescue and pluck some wretched smarting firebrands out of the eternal flame, where otherwise they must have lain consuming, but not consumed, for ever.

With what face or heart can any one, having this thought fresh upon him, resolve to sin? Has Christ passed over the fallen angels without any commiseration; so that, for want of a

redeemer, they are passed into the state of devils? And shall we, by having and abusing a Redeemer, make ourselves worse?

Still let us remember, that Christ so redeems us from wrath, that he will first redeem us from our vain conversation: and that by this stupendous incarnation of the divine nature, he made himself "the Son of man," that, by the change of our nature, we might become the sons of God.

SERMON XXVI.

THE FALSE CAUSES TO WHICH MEN ARE APT TO REFER GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

JOHN IX. 2, 3.

And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

THE evangelist here presents us with a signal miracle, done by Christ upon a blind man. To advance which in the esteem of believers, and to confirm it against the cavils of atheists, he remarkably sets down that he was blind from his birth: so setting forth the greatness of the cure, from the circumstances of the malady.

A blindness accidentally contracted, as by overmuch watching, excessive rheums, or a film growing over the eyes, or the like, may sometimes find a remedy from art; but to cure such a blindness as is born with a man (as one well observes, and as properly expresses it), *non artis, sed potestatis est;* it is not a work of skill, but an effect of power; not so much the removing of blindness, as the creating of sight. Which did not, as some may atheistically imagine, show Christ's knowledge in physic, but prove the divinity of his call.

For as it is in the 32d verse, "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." And, I think, that may be pronounced naturally impossible to be done, of the doing of which, from the very first beginning of nature, there has been no instance.

Now the circumstance of this blindness, thus expressed in the words of the first verse, was the occasion of these words that follow in the two next: in which we have,

1. A question of Christ's disciples.
2. The answer, or rejoinder of Christ.

The disciples' question is contained in these words, "Did this man sin, or his parents, that he was born blind?" The scope and intent of which interrogatory is not agreed upon by all; but the design of the proposal of it may be twofold.

(1.) That they simply and positively proposed it as their opinion, really judging all maladies of the body to come from

the antecedent demerit of sin: according to which supposition, looking upon all men's sufferings as the effects of their personal sins; and seeing here, in this man, the evil inflicted before the sin could be committed; they were much gravelled in resolving how this man's blindness could relate to sin as the meritorious cause. Hereupon, they asked whether God inflicted it "for his own sin, or for the sin of his parents?" which words may be understood two ways.

First, Of sin considered by God as past, and actually committed: and so if we understand it of the parents' sin, we know that God sometimes avenges the sin of the parent upon the child; as we find in David, and his child, who died for his murder and adultery.

But if we understand it of sin already committed in his own person, so it savours of the opinion of Pythagoras, then common amongst the Jews, as also at this day, that there is a metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls from one body to another successively; and accordingly as the soul had behaved itself in one body, after the death of it, it was disposed of into another, suitably to its former behaviour: that is, if it had done virtuously, into a body fair and healthful; if viciously, into a body maimed and deformed, as here. So that the soul of this man, for some fault done in that body in which it was before, might be condemned to such a blind habitation as it enjoyed at present.

Secondly, It may be understood of his sin, not as past and committed, but as future and foreknown by God: so that the sense of their question would be, Whether God inflicted this blindness upon him for some offence of his parents, or for some sin of his own, which, while he was yet unborn, God foresaw he would afterwards commit; and for the merit of which foreseen sin, he inflicted this severe judgment upon him, as to send him blind into the world, even from his nativity? If they proposed this question as their opinion, it might indifferently be grounded upon either of these acceptations.

(2.) Some think that they did not propose this as their opinion, but only for argument sake, and that, occasioned by a former passage recorded in John v., where Christ, having healed a man, "bid him go and sin no more, lest a worse evil befell him." Whereupon they collected, that it was Christ's judgment, that every such evil or distemper befell men meritoriously for their sin; but not being able to reconcile this instance with the reason of that opinion, they argued the case with Christ in this dilemna: if every evil befalls men for their sin, then how could this man be blind? for if it were for sin, it must be either for his own sin, or for the sin of his parents: but not for his own sin, because it befell him before his birth, and consequently before he could commit sin: nor yet for his parents' sin, because God had said that the child should not suffer for his father's sin, "but the soul

that sinned should die." Therefore certainly sin is not always the cause why men are sick, afflicted, or unfortunate; but there must be some other cause to which these evils ought to be ascribed, as appears from the example of this man.

Now this sense is also probable, were it not for this, that the argument is founded upon the impossibility of God's punishing the children for the parents; the contrary of which is positively asserted in scripture, as in Exod. xx. 5, where God says, that "he would visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation." Besides that this way of arguing seems but little agreeable to the modesty and distance becoming disciples, thus to dispute with their master upon the catch; as also too artificial for their abilities, it being well known that they were never bred to the niceties of logic, either in making syllogisms or dilemmas.

The next thing to be considered is Christ's rejoinder, in these words, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents;" which words must needs be elliptical; and therefore the foregoing sentence is to be repeated with it, "Neither did this man nor his parents sin, that he was born blind." Otherwise the words, barely considered, would contradict those scriptures that affirm all men to be sinners. But howsoever words may appear, it is certain that the sense of one scripture cannot contradict the sense of another: besides, the words, "Neither did he sin, nor his parents," cannot be understood simply, that he did not sin, but that sin was not the cause of his blindness. Otherwise the answer does not reach the scope of the question, which inquires, not barely whether he sinned, but whether his sin procured him this malady, which Christ, in this answer, appositely denies.

But you will say, Is not the fall of Adam, and our original sin emerging from thence, the cause of all the miseries and diseases that are incident to mankind?

I answer, It is indeed the remote and general cause, or rather the *causa sine qua non;* for where it not for Adam's fall, and for original sin, there would be no such maladies or distempers. But the question here is not of the remote and general cause, but of the proper, particular, and immediate cause of this blindness. And this cannot be original sin; for so, wheresoever it was, it would have this effect, and consequently all men would be born blind, inasmuch as all have original sin; which is absurd, and contrary to experience.

Christ, therefore, having removed the false cause, subjoins the true, "that the works of God might be made manifest in him." Some lay an emphasis upon the plural word, that it is not said *work*, but *works;* for first, in his blindness, God had manifested a work of absolute power; and then, in his restitution, a work of mercy. Some also from hence draw an argument for Christ's divinity, that his *work* is called "the work of God." But I shall

not insist upon these, as neither being very firm in themselves, nor relating to my purpose.

But it may be of some concernment, to state the import of the particle *that*, in the Greek ἵνα; whether it denotes the cause, or only the event and consequence of the thing, as in the 39th verse of this chapter, "I came into the world, *that* seeing they might not see." Where we cannot say, that the hardening of any was the cause or end why Christ came into the world; but an event or consequence, that through the pravity of their hearts, happened upon his coming. So the manifesting the works of God might not be the cause why this man was born blind, but a thing that occasionally fell out, upon his being so.

But still, the common reason of discourse does compel us to measure the sense of the answer by the nature of the question. Now the disciples' question was about the cause of this man's blindness, and therefore Christ's answer must be so too; and not when they asked him about the cause, to answer them about the consequent of it. This would have been to make them ask Christ one thing, and Christ to resolve them in another: which if he had, though what he said might have been a truth, yet it could not have been an answer. I conclude, therefore, that Christ means, that the manifesting of God's power in this miraculous cure, was the final cause moving God to inflict this blindness upon him from his birth.

And thus there is a way cleared through the exposition of the words, which briefly exhibit to us the erroneous curiosity of the disciples, in their pragmatical inquiry into the reason of God's judgments, and the state of another man's soul. And on the other hand, they show both the divine knowledge and excellent strain of charity that shined in Christ's reply; in which, by a reprehensive shortness, he both clears the man's innocence, and vindicates God's proceedings; and so states them both upon a right foundation.

I shall now draw forth and prosecute the design of the words in these three propositions:

I. That men are prone to charge God's judgments upon false causes.

II. That not always the sin or merit of the person afflicted, but sometimes the will of God, who afflicts, is the sole and sufficient reason of the affliction.

III. Though God's will and power be a sufficient reason of any evil inflicted upon man, yet he never inflicts it, but for the great end of advancing his own glory, and that usually in the way of their good.

In the prosecution of these, it will appear, how each of them is deduced from the text.

I. For the first of these, though it be a universal, drawn from

a particular instance of the disciples, yet the reason and principles inducing them thus to judge, being common to all, I think the case, though particular, may not illogically yield a universal deduction. Besides, it amounts to an argument drawn *à fortiore*, that if the disciples, who were continually under the nurture and instruction of Christ himself, were yet apt to lash out into such extravagant censures, then certainly other men will be so much more, who have not the advantage of so near an access to his person, nor of such familiar acquaintance with his precepts.

In the handling of this proposition, I shall show,

1. The false causes to which men are apt to refer God's judgments. 2. The principles inducing them to make such false references.

1. The causes, in short, are these two:

(1.) Sin on his part that suffers. There is a generation of men who have built their faith upon the ruins of charity, and wholly cried up one, while they sufficiently acted down the other. These, upon the hearing of any judgment or disaster fallen upon any man, immediately second it with these censures; "As for this man, we know that he is a sinner:" for does not God single him out and expose him as a spectacle to men and angels? Does he not punish him as he did Cain, so as to "mark his sin in his very forehead?"

As soon as ever the blow is given, then they fall to judge and guess at the cause; first they kill, and then condemn; first do execution, and then pass sentence. Certainly such a man is rotten at the heart, otherwise do you think that God would have thus thrown him away? He has not "the power of godliness," for if he had, would God have seen him stripped, plundered, and imprisoned?

And if, perhaps, such a one had been severe to advance discipline and suppress the factious, then to be sure they worry him home. Do you not remember how he persecuted such and such a precious man, such a saint, such a gospel-preaching minister? Now, I think, the vengeance of God has overtaken him. Thus when Cicero, the preserver of his country, was banished by a prevailing faction, then the rabble and rascality of Rome cried out, that the gods revenged his cruelty to Catiline and his companions.

And moreover, according to the example in the text, they will arraign even the dead also, and charge upon a man the sins of his ancestors. Thus the curse must lineally descend from the father to the son, as part of the inheritance: one must be condemned in the other; if the son is miserable, the father, no doubt, was very sinful. Does his estate perish and moulder away? Questionless it is because his father got it by bribery, or extortion, or the like.

Thus the name of the dead, which should be sacred and reverenced, but always spared, is unchristianly, inhumanly torn

and traduced: the poor father, in the meantime, as it were, suffering in his son, and in a manner being executed *in effigie;* and the afflicted son having this further load added to his affliction, to hear the defaming of his deceased father.

But then, when they come also to charge a man's miseries upon his personal sins, how many surmises, presumptions, and whispers, shall there be of his supposed guilt! charging him with such and such secret sins, and those indeed oftentimes so secret, that God himself knows not of them. In short, they do the most unjust thing in the world; they argue what a man has done, by what he suffers.

(2.) The second false cause, on which men charge God's judgments, is hatred on God's part. They argue as Gideon to the angel, If God loved them, how could it be thus with them? For can God torment in love? can he kill with kindness? does the noise of his strokes and the sounding of his bowels speak the same thing? Certainly an enemy's behaviour must needs import an enemy's heart; and the violence of his own actions are caused and influenced by the hatred of his affections.

But such disputers should know how remote their argument is from the truth: for God may strike, and yet not be angry; and further, he may be angry, and yet not hate. The hand of a father may do the one, and his heart may entertain the other; but to hate a son consists not with that relation. God may smite his creature, and yet tenderly love him at the same time. The air may be clear and wholesome, and yet very sharp. God may register the same name in the book of his eternal election, which he suffers to be proscribed here in the course of providence: and eternal salvation in another world is very fairly consistent with certain destruction in this. While nothing but storms and tempests encounter a man in these lower regions, there may be a perfect calm and serenity in the mansions above.

But let us sift this argument a little further: we will not from God's outward earthly favours collect his love, and from the mercies of the left hand argue a title to those of the right. Why then, on the contrary, do we not use the same argument, where there is the same reason; and from the severity of God's outward dealings, not conclude the certainty of his hatred? Solomon argues equally on both sides, Ecclesiastes ix. 1, "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him." And he that shall make God's outward promiscuous providences the marks of his inward affections, will spell that meaning out of them, that neither they signify, nor God intends.

This therefore is the second mistaken course upon which men are apt to charge the divine judgments; namely, God's hatred of the person whom he so afflicts. If a man is signally brought low, he is presently a reprobate and a castaway, an abomination to the Lord, one whom God has laid aside and will never use more;

which were the terms and language by which many excellent persons were not long since treated by a generation of men, who, by rapine and reformation being possessed of their places and estates, were as bold to promise themselves as sure a perseverance in temporals, as they did in spirituals.

Such persons, when God has done execution upon any, then in a preposterous way they pronounce the sentence, and after he is executed, then set upon him, and condemn him. But blessed be God that he is not forced to write after their dictates, and that man's hatred is not God's. Wherefore we may take shelter in the word of truth, from all such wandering, roving, and impertinent censures. Prov. xxvi. 2, "As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying," and I may add, as such men by judging, "so the curse causeless shall not come," unless perhaps upon the head of those who thus pronounce it, but then it ceases to be causeless.

2. The second thing is, to show the principles inducing men thus to charge God's judgments upon false causes, and these are three.

(1.) The fallibility of the rule, and the falseness of the opinion by which they judge. The rule is providence, and the opinion is, that God's providence is an evidence of his love. For the first, in this they lay the ground of necessary error: for he must equally err who follows a false rule, and who follows none. Now a rule, in the nature of it, implies certainty; and certainty in actions consists in a perpetual infallible repetition of the same instance, at least supposing the same circumstances.

But now God's providence, though it is certain to him, all the windings and varieties of it being clearly and infallibly represented to his omniscience, yet to us it is uncertain, as not always producing the same instances in the same cases. Such a one is in a strait, and prays, and is delivered: but is this a rule for me to judge, that whosoever is in the same strait, and prays, shall meet with the same deliverance? Experience shows the contrary, and there is no confuting of experience. In short, providences cannot be brought under any general rule, except only this, that they are according to God's will; which will is not revealed, and therefore cannot be known till the event declares it.

And as for the opinion that is founded upon this rule, that God's love and hatred are writ upon his providential dealings; it is not only to be denied as false, but to be detested as impious and uncharitable, as that which tends to extirpate brotherly love and civil converse out of the world.

For since even nature will convince us that our love ought to follow God's love, and our hatred to second his, wheresoever he is pleased to fix it; then collecting God's love where I see a man prosper, I must love him too, which indeed is profitable; and on the other side, concluding his hatred where I see any

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For since even nature will convince us that our love ought to follow God's love, and our hatred to second his, wheresoever he is pleased to fix it; then collecting God's love where I see a man prosper, I must love him too, which indeed is profitable; and on the other side, concluding his hatred where I see any

to a worse hand. For the will is both a blind and a commanding faculty, and therefore has the two worst of qualities in conjunction, not to discern, and yet to domineer. And certainly, when this interprets providences, they cannot but be direful; and he who is censured, very unhappy, when God must be angry with him as often as his adversary is pleased to be malicious.

There is scarce any thing in the world so entirely bad, but may be much qualified by a fair acceptance; and nothing so absolutely good, but may be detorted and soiled at least by a malign interpreter. What can be more beautiful, perfect, and equal, than the ways and works of the omnipotent all-wise God? And yet what more harsh, unequal, and destructive, when they are in the dispensing of men, and distributed to each man by his enemy! They are like the rain which falls pure from heaven, but arriving to the earth, turns into mud. Even the divine dealings are not privileged from the prejudices of malice; but God's works are, like his words, liable to be wrested: malice is the bias of the soul, that sways it in all its operations.

To judge properly is to apply a rule, and a mind possessed with malice is under great disturbances; so that a malicious person is as fit and able to make a right judgment of things, as a shaking hand to take exact measures; or a person that is drunk to study the mathematics, and to resolve problems.

And when the decrees of Heaven shall be examined by the partiality of perverse, malicious, and discontented persons, we must expect nothing else but the ugly issues of passion, darkness, and confusion.

And thus I have shewn the principles inducing men to pass false and uncomely sentences upon God's judgments. For the first inevitable foundation of this erroneous judging, is the uncertainty of the rule by which they judge: but supposing the rule were certain, yet there follows weakness in the understanding attended with rashness, that makes it unable to apply the rule. And lastly, though both the rule were certain, and the understanding apprehensive and steady; yet there being malice in the will to pervert the intellect in its sentencing God's judgments, it follows, that we have always almost false and deformed reports made concerning God's dealings with men. Whence it is, that there never happens any calamity, but the suffering is by this redoubled; men suffering by the uncharitableness, God by the falseness of the censure. And thus much for the first proposition.

II. I proceed now to the second, viz. *That not always the sin or merit of the person afflicted, but the will of God that afflicts, is sometimes the sole, but always the sufficient reason of the affliction.*

That this is so, is apparent from several scriptures; and to produce one instead of all, see the whole series of Job's sufferings

resolved into this, and that by the impartial determination of God himself. His friends charged him sometimes with the sins of his life, sometimes with the hypocrisy of his heart; but still they rested upon this as a certain maxim, "that God never smites, but for sin;" which was the sum of all their discourses. But God confutes this strange divinity, declaring withal, his severe anger against them, Job xlii. 7, because "they had not said that which was right of him, as his servant Job had." So that we have the testimony of the Father in the Old Testament, ratified by the testimony of the Son in the New, that God does not always afflict for sin.

And here we must observe a necessary distinction between punishments and afflictions. Punishment is properly the evil of sufferance for the evil of sin; and, therefore, is always founded in the merit of some precedent sin, inherent or imputed. But affliction is only God's bringing the evil of pain upon the creature, whatsoever the cause may be for which he does it. So that we see, though every punishment include in it affliction, yet every affliction is not convertibly a punishment.

Now, since this may seem to grate hard upon human nature, which cannot but love itself; I shall clear this proceeding of God from injustice, upon these reasons.

1. The first shall be drawn from his absolute, unaccountable dominion and sovereignty over the creature. God is an absolute Lord over all things: and we know, even in earthly kingdoms, as here in ours, it is a received maxim in the law, *Regem nec errare posse, nec cuiquam injuriam facere.* God has as much power over his laws, as over his subjects; and he that has a right over all things can do no injury: and he that cannot go against a law, can do no wrong; as he that cannot tread out of his own land, can commit no trespass. So that the creature, upon no suffering whatsoever, can implead his Maker. He that *can* do what he will, *may* do what he will: for the supreme law is the will of the supreme power.

Let not therefore any think, that God must fetch a license for his actings from our merit or demerit. *Sic volo, sic jubeo,* howsoever tyrannical and intolerable from men, yet, uttered by God, is the greatest reason in the world. As God's truth is the reason of our faith, so his will is the reason into which we must resolve our obedience. Those who can stand upon terms with God, and question and arraign his proceedings, manifest but low and unworthy thoughts of the infinite essential majesty of his nature, and too arrogant apprehensions of their own.

Do we not see, amongst ourselves, the owner use his cattle as he pleases, employ them as he thinks fit, keep what he will alive, kill what he will, and in what manner he will; and all this without any injury to them, only by virtue of a grant and charter from both his and their Maker? And yet they are his fellow-

creatures, and the distance between them is not considerable; neither is the good of man the utmost end of these creatures, which he makes such a free use of. What shall we then say of the power of God himself to dispose of men? little, finite, obnoxious things of his own making? Is not his right over them inconceivably greater? May he not, as an absolute monarch, pull down whom he pleases, and whom he pleases set up? and who can tax the reason of his proceeding in all this?

That which has its being only for another may be used, preserved, destroyed, as may best advance that thing to which, both in being and well being, it is subservient. Were I as free from sin as Adam in his innocence, and had never in the least provoked the curse of the law, and God should be pleased to smite me with all the pains and plagues that torture the body, and should divest me of all livelihood, and reduce me to hunger, nakedness, and the rage and scorn of my enemies, and fill my mind with as much horror and despair as could consist with a being, and after that, throw me into eternal flames; I might say, indeed, I was ruined, but not injured: neither could I therefore be charged as sinful, because God is pleased to deal with me as if I were. And these dealings of God, if you would give them their right and proper name, cannot be called cruel, but strange; unusual indeed, but not unrighteous. Now this consideration may regulate the behaviour of one man to another, and of all towards God: for if the dealings of God do not presuppose the merit of our sin, then we cannot charge any man as sinful, because he suffers. And then also, since God has an absolute dominion, he who suffers cannot charge God, who afflicts, as unjust; for God's laws are intended for the rule of our actions, not his own.

2. The second reason may be drawn from the essential equity of God's nature. The practice of justice, on man's part, is indeed at the free choice of his will; but God's is fixed in the necessity of his being. And though God cannot be subject to any positive law, as springing from the sole determination of his own will, yet his nature is to him instead of a law: that is to say, as the creature is, by a law, both obliged and directed to do well; so the native rectitude of the divine will necessarily determines him to the exactest proportions of justice in all his actions.

An absolute power in men is, for the most part, sinful and injurious; because of the imperfection of their will, which is not able to bound the exorbitances of that power: and if it does not prove actually the cause of sin, yet it is always a temptation to it. But God's dominion is so absolute, as to be also infinite; and to be infinite in one perfection, of necessity draws after it an infinity in all others. And, therefore, having proved an infinite power, by that very thing we prove an infinite justice: wherefore we are not necessarily to seek for the reasonableness of God's transacting with man, from any thing that man has done well or ill; but to place the ground of his actions within himself.

It is confessed there are some astonishing passages in providence, and such as are above the weak logic and narrow maxims of the creature; so that to reconcile them to justice, has nonplussed the wisest and most sanctified persons. Jeremiah xii. 1, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" &c. And David, we read, stumbled against the same stone; "his foot had well nigh slipped:" Psalm lxxiii. 2, 3. And parallel to the prosperity of the wicked has been the affliction of the righteous, which has always been a problem of as hard resolution as the other.

This is certain, that God is infinitely just, whether or no we apprehend how he is so. It is impossible for God to do any thing but what is right; but it is very possible for us, who are weak and fallible at the best, not always to discern it. When we think his ways are imperfect, we should remember, that the imperfection is only in our understanding. It is not the ground or the trees that turn round; but the truth is, we are giddy, and think so.

For us, in all God's dealings, to acknowledge the undoubted equity of his principles, and our ignorance of his methods, is not only humility, but philosophy; for it shows, that we have arrived to the top of knowledge, even to understand both God and ourselves. Much to contemplate in God, frequently to consider him, and study his nature, though we do it but as philosophers, is a sovereign way to be satisfied and resolved about the reason of all his actions. Because I cannot see the light, shall I say, that the sun does not shine? There may be many reasons that may hinder me. Something may cover the eye, or the clouds may cover the sun, or it may be in another horizon, as in the night; but it is impossible for the sun, as long as it is a sun, not to shine.

Now this tends to compose men's doubts, and to confute their murmurings, and to set God clear in their esteem, upon supposition of any of his dealings whatsoever. For although God's ways are intricate and unsearchable, yet we may undertake to give a reason of them so far, as to take off the cavil and the reprehension, though not the wonder.

Wherefore, when such difficulties occur, we should remember to cast one eye upon God's absolute power, and the other upon his essential righteousness; through the former of which, he may do what he will, through the latter he cannot will any thing but what is just.

3. The third reason is from the unerring, all-disposing wisdom of God. Though God's actings may seem confused, and his judgments misplaced, yet they are managed by such an infinitely wise contrivance, that, could we take a view of them as they lay disposed in God's counsel, and compare the design with the pro-

ceeding, we should confess that they were put into the most beautiful, exact, and orderly frame that could be. Sometimes the destruction of particular natures tends to preserve and advance the universal. As a monstrous misshapen thing is, in itself, most deformed; but could we have a sight of the whole universe, and see how this ugly thing stood related to those which were perfect and comely, we should acknowledge, that howsoever it did misbecome itself, yet it did adorn the world.

We see God's judgments pursuing and overtaking a man in his righteousness: let us not now murmur, and say, How can God justly afflict the upright? But let us acquiesce in the rational acknowledgment of this, that God's wisdom may outreach ours. We see the dispensation, but we do not see the design of it; and therefore let us suspend our censure.

If we should see a goldsmith cutting, breaking, or filing a piece of gold, and come and say to him, Friend, what do you mean to spoil your gold? Do you not know the value of what you thus cut and file away? What a ridiculous question would this be to him, who knows that, in what we call spoil, he pursues the rational purposes of his own art; that to the excellence of the metal, he may also add the curiousness of the figure? But now is it not, think you, much more ridiculous for such blind silly worms as we, to call God's works to an account? and to censure whatsoever thwarts our humour, or transcends our apprehensions?

God has put darkness under his feet, that we cannot spy out his ways; but his wisdom gives us good security for their reasonableness. The greatest artificers, we know, will often, even in the day-time, immure themselves in a dark room, and work by a candle: and what wonder is it, if God is more careful to conceal the arts and mysteries of his providence from the inquisitive eye of those, whose duty is to admire, rather than to understand them? It is one great piece of art to conceal art.

God delights to pose and baffle the bold reasons of men with the riddles of his actions; to try their humility, where their discernment fails; and to lead them, by an implicit faith, in the wisdom of the doer, where they see not the reason of the work. Let, therefore, the consideration of the divine wisdom be a third ground to warrant the righteousness of God's strangest actions, beyond all human exception. And this naturally introduces the third proposition, viz.

III. *Though God's will and power be a sufficient reason of any evil inflicted upon men, yet he never inflicts it, but for the great end of advancing his glory, and that usually in the way of their good.*

This is sufficiently clear in the present instance: for God inflicted a native blindness upon this poor man, not only because he *might*, and because he *would*, but that afterwards, by this

wonderful removal of it, both the Messiah should be discovered, and himself and others should have a pregnant occasion of being converted to him, the advantage of which was infinite. And questionless, the man had cause to congratulate himself this fortunate affliction: for had it not been for this blindness, he might have been like the rest of the Jews, "having eyes, but not seeing, nor perceiving," but remaining spiritually blind and obstinate. And to have open eyes, but a sealed heart, would have been like a window opened in the night-time, which, however it was open, would have let in no light. But by this unusual providence, Christ takes occasion to dart a beam of saving light into his understanding, and so gave him cause of ever blessing God for that bodily affliction, which was the happy occasion of such a spiritual deliverance.

Now this glorious design of God, in bringing these calamities on men, is expressed in those words of the text, "that the works of God might be made manifest in him." And the works that God intends thus to glorify are usually these.

1. The miraculous works of his power. Had not God suffered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, to be cast into the furnace, he had not had that opportunity to have convinced the heathen of that power, which was able to overrule and control natural agents in their most necessary operations; to countermand the burning in the midst of the flame; and, when the furnace was seven degrees hotter, to cause it to operate below the degree of four. God sometimes, by his power, inflicts a sickness, that he may show a miracle in the cure. That God decreed so many years' cruel bondage to the Israelites, it was the absolute entire resolve of his own will, not their merit: for it was foretold by God to Abraham, long before they had any being, and therefore before they could merit any such doom by their sin. But then it was to usher in those stupendous miracles, by which God professed to get himself a name, and transmit a never-dying awe and renown of his power to all posterity. He was (as I may so say) now building himself a pyramid in the midst of Egypt: and what if he was so long afflicting his people, and took so great a compass of time to prepare himself a name, that was to last to eternity!

Now what man is there, that can arm himself with reason and submission, who would refuse to be miserable, when his misery is matter of God's glory? He is made by this a kind of sharer with God; for as long as God's actions shall be spoken of, he also shall be mentioned as the subject of it. For in all curious works, the matter upon which they are wrought wears some of the glory of the artificer; and there is no admiring the image, but you must also see the wood, stone, or metal upon which it is carved.

Besides, in the things that we are discoursing of, it is not pain

that is misery, but the sting of sin that envenoms it: for sin is not only the sting of death, but also of every affliction; and take but away this sting, the serpent may bite, but he cannot poison us. It is rare to see the notions of the very heathen about this. Cicero, speaking of Regulus, who, I think, suffered as much as man could well suffer, says, that in the midst of all those torments, Regulus could not properly be called miserable; because he neither procured nor bore them sinfully. Hence brutes are not properly capable of misery, because not of sin. The poor beast or fowl that is torn, hunted, and slaughtered, is not miserable; but he that slaughters and devours him for his luxury and his sin, he is properly and truly miserable: he has the misery, though the other has the pain.

And there is as much difference between a man's suffering for God's pleasure, and for his own sin, as there is between burning upon the altar, and burning in hell. So long therefore as the creature suffers barely from God's will and for his glory, he is only made to quit his own pleasure, to serve a greater and a better; and this is not his misery, but his privilege.

2. The other works that God manifests, are the works of his grace. The word ἐν signifies not only *in*, but *upon*, or *about*. And I have thought good to husband the sense so, as to take in both acceptations. In the former, I showed, that God took such strange courses to glorify his miraculous works *upon men*. I shall now show, that he takes these ways sometimes to glorify his gracious works *within them*. We know the bowels of the earth are rent and torn, before the riches of the earth can be discovered.

Grace would lie dormant and concealed, did not God sometimes employ as strange a power to discover as he does to infuse it. How could that excellent spirit and ruling wisdom that Joseph was endued with, have shined forth to the world, had he not been led through such a maze and compass of troubles and distracting afflictions by the special disposal of Providence? God's power might have warranted the whole proceeding; for when he sold him to the Egyptians, he only sold what, upon the best terms of propriety in the world, was his own. When he put him into prison, and the dungeon, we know that even the supreme power amongst men may, for some causes, imprison those that are not guilty: and who knows but this imprisonment of Joseph was not so much intended for a punishment as a preservative; for a temptation may be repulsed once and again, and yet rally and return, and prevail at last.

But God, in all this, drove at a divine purpose. He had conferred great gifts, illustrious faculties upon Joseph, and therefore was resolved not to lose the glory of their discovery. And was it not worthy his being hated of his brethren, and being sold out of his country, to give such a noble example of fidelity and chastity, as to stand a monument of it in holy writ, for the admi-

ration and imitation of all following ages? Was not the iron and the dungeon tolerable, when it was a means to show forth that spirit to the world, which made Joseph the possessor of it next to Pharaoh: and declared the God of Joseph, the giver of it, to be above him? The truth is, neither those that sold, nor those to whom they did sell him, but Joseph who was sold, had the best bargain.

We have shown, that it was not for Job's sin that God afflicted him; but because he was freely pleased to do so: yet there was a reason of this pleasure, which was to discover that grace of patience, given him by God, to the astonishment of the world, and the confutation of the devil; whom we find so impudent as to bear God down to his face, that he had never a servant in the world who would suffer such things from him, without sinning against him. And was it not worth the sitting upon a dunghill, and seeing his substance scattered, his children struck dead, and himself mocked in his misery, to vindicate the honour of that God, who gave him all these things, from the devil, the true common enemy? and to be recorded as a mirror of patience to all posterity? and to convince the world, that there is something in virtue better than possessions, truer than friends, and stronger than Satan? Though this dealing was not an effect of God's vindictive justice, but of his absolute power; yet it equally served both God's glory and Job's advantage.

For had it not been for this, he had lost that experience of his own temper, and of the malice of the devil, and the baseness of his friends, and of the goodness of God, and the uncertainty of the world: he had lost also that overplus of wealth that he had in the end: and lastly, if nothing else, he had lost the pleasure of being freed from such sorrows.

Thus God suffered Moses to be unworthily dealt with by his brethren, and oftentimes afflicted by the unruly rebellions of the Israelites; not to punish his sin, but to manifest his meekness, and consequently to glorify the power that gave it. For we must know, that there are some graces which cannot be exercised, at least not manifested, but in calamities: as we cannot see a man's patience, unless he is afflicted; nor his meekness, unless he is affronted.

No wonder, therefore, if every afflicting dispensation cannot be ascribed to sin; for sometimes it is so far from this, that it comes from the contrary. And I think I have made it appear, that though sin only can be the cause of punishment, yet even grace itself may be the occasion of an affliction.

The use and improvement of the doctrine hitherto discussed shall be a confutation and reproof of the bold uncharitable interpreters of God's providences. A reproof cannot be better bestowed than upon an unjust reprover, nor charity more shown, than in a just reprehension of those who have none.

What strange reports have we had in these late times about prodigies, in which, indeed, nothing was so prodigious as the falseness of the report! What monstrous births has the world lately seen, begot by discontent, brought forth by malice, and fostered by credulity! What unreasonable unchristian censures! Such a one, for being of such a way, that is, perhaps, for following his conscience and the church, is fallen sick, another dead, another struck suddenly; in most of which, the very matter of the report has been contrary. And if people talk of judgments, I think it is a great judgment to be delivered over to report lies, and yet a greater to believe them.

But suppose things were really so, and that the very curse of Egypt were come upon us, even so far as to have one struck dead in every family: yet, who art thou, O man, that durst to pry into the secresies of thy Maker's proceedings? or condemn another's servant, who stands or falls to his own master? How dares any man put his own sense upon God's actions? which, though it may happen to be true in itself, yet is certainly uncharitable in him; and that man will one day find it but a poor gain, who hits upon truth, with the loss of charity.

Let us rather apply this resolve of Christ, in the words of the text, to all the rugged instances of providence. Does God think fit to banish and afflict a Joseph? and yet it is not for his own or his father's sin, but for his honour and his father's sustenance, and to fit him to rule and to save a kingdom. Do we see Providence send a blast upon our neighbour's estate, or a fire upon his house? perhaps that fire is not so much to consume the house, as to try the man; to destroy the possession, as to refine the owner.

God, peradventure, thinks fit to afflict a Job, and to exalt a dunghill; but what reason have I to descant upon the action, when I am ignorant of the purpose which directed it? Let us leave God to himself. It is possible that, though we judge never so right, God may not approve our judgments; and it is certain that he cannot need them. Or shall we confess God's ways to be unsearchable and past finding out; and yet, at the same time, attempt to give a reason of them, and so to the arrogance add a contradiction?

Cur bonis malè, et malis benè, was the grand old difficulty that has exercised the learned men and philosophers of all ages: and if experience or reason could have decided it, they had as great a share of both, as we can pretend to. But now we having the superadded light of God's word, cannot excuse ourselves if we inherit their doubts, and seek for any other reason of the dispensation besides the will of the dispenser.

But that I may reduce a general reason to a particular instance, I would have those seraphic masters of reason, who think themselves able to bring all God's providences even under demonstration, clear up and demonstrate to me this one passage of it,

viz. Why the best of kings, and the most innocent, virtuous, and truly religious, that we find in history ever sat upon a throne, was yet rebelled against, imprisoned, mocked, tried, and condemned, and at last cut off by his own subjects before his own palace: and his murderer, who had violated all laws human and divine, broken all oaths, oppressed the state, torn in pieces the church, defied God and disturbed his neighbours, should reign in his stead peaceably and successfully, and at length die in his bed; and, for a conclusion of all, be magnificently interred. Let them, I say, give a competent reason for all this, and if they cannot, let them stand and adore, and not pretend to interpret.

In the mean time, this peremptory way of judging, as it is highly odious to God upon many accounts, so more peculiarly is it so for the cursed cause of it, curiosity; for it is this, which above all other qualities makes men presume to look into the ark, and therefore will be sure to provoke God to strike. Curiosity, in the true nature of it, is, and may be properly accounted the incontinence of the mind, and but one remove from the rebellion of it; as breaking through all the bounds God has set about the secrets of his counsel. So that next to the disputing of God's revealed will, the greatest invasion, doubtless, that can be made upon his royal prerogative, is to intrude into his secret.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, &c. Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

THE DESIGN WHICH GOD HAS IN FORGIVING SIN.

PSALM CXXX. 4.

But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

AFTER man had once sinned, and so was for ever disabled to stand before God upon terms of the law, which spoke nothing but irrecoverable death to him who transgressed in the least iota, and so carried more thunder in its curse, than it did in its promulgation; had God continued this inexorable sentence, and held man irreversibly under the doom which he incurred; since there is in every thing by nature an indelible principle of self-preservation, and consequently a love to all things that advance its being and comply with its happiness, and a hatred to whatsoever would destroy it: such a remorseless behaviour in God, meeting with such a principle in man, would of necessity have wrought in him these two things: 1. Horror of despair; 2. Height of malice.

1. For the first of these, it would have reduced him to horror of despair. When a man sees an omnipotence against him, and knows that an unchangeable God has sworn his destruction, nature must needs despond, all the doors of hope, all the avenues of comfort being stopped; so that his misery admits no possibility of the least relief, no, not so much as of a reprieve.

The thoughts dwell, and, as it were, brood upon those representations of a punishment not to be borne, and yet not to be avoided. He knows the sin to be committed, and that therefore it cannot be recalled: he also sees God implacable, and that therefore it cannot be forgiven. Hereupon he throws up all, and sinks under the burden. He is like a man in the midst of the sea, which way soever he looks, he sees nothing but air and water before him, no land upon which to save or repose himself. And in this case we have the verdict of God himself, Isa. lvii. 16, "that if he should always be angry, if he should contend for ever, the spirit would fail before him, and the souls which he had made."

Now in this condition of despair, man would have been utterly unserviceable to God, as being wholly uncapable of those motives by which the creature is drawn to his service. For every man is brought to duty, either by the engagement of some reward, some good that is to follow his performance; but this has no influence upon him, who believes that his condition shall never be better:

or he must be moved to duty by the fear of some evil, that will pursue the omission of it; but neither can this work any thing upon him who knows his condition can never be worse. Hereupon he is utterly careless, obstinately regardless of his happiness or salvation; inasmuch as no man either does or can seriously intend or endeavour what he apprehends an impossibility.

2. Together with this horror of despair succeeds also height of malice. God indeed is infinitely amiable in himself, made up of a confluence of the most endearing perfections; there is nothing in him but what is the object of love, and the allurement of desire.

But inasmuch as we cannot view him here by an immediate inspection of his nature, but as he reaches us by his works and effects; which as they either gratify or afflict us, do accordingly move in us suitable affections; it is impossible for any man to apprehend God his irreconcileable enemy, and at the same time not to hate him. Whatsoever is destructive, is also odious. What makes the devils prosecute God with a direct hatred, but that they apprehend their destruction remediless? And put man in the same condition with them, and his malice will be the same with theirs.

For this is not an affection that depends upon the freedom of man's will, but it streams from him by a necessary egress of nature; it is as unconquerable as antipathy. When a man sees a thing evil and hurtful to his being, he hates it not by choice, but by the constraint of his first inclinations. As it is impossible for a man not to disbelieve what he knows to be false, so it is equally impossible for him not to hate and abhor what he apprehends to be hurtful. "Thou shalt love thy friend, and hate thy enemy," is a principle writ and engraven in every heart by the finger of nature. And God, as a Creator, has put that into the heart of man which will force him to hate God himself as an enemy.

Clothe God with vengeance, arm him with terror, and represent him implacable, and at the same time shut all the passages of escape, by which a guilty person may run from him, and secure himself; and you shall see, that with the forced fortitude of despair, he will defy him, curse him, and fly in his face, and proportion his hatred not to the finiteness of his own nature, but enlarge it to the infinity of God's, whom he hates. In Rev. xvi. 11, we read of those who blasphemed God, because of their pains and their sores.

That God is to be served, and virtue to be loved for themselves, sequestered from all consideration of advantage to the persons that do so, is a maxim I am afraid more glorious in the notion, than true in the experiment. For it is the voice of human nature in all man's actions, "Who will show us any good?"

And if a man finds himself ruined or tormented, he considers only the evil that he feels, and not the hand from which it comes.

And he hates as heartily for the execution, whether his father or the hangman be the executioner.

Now the case standing thus, that God might not eternally lop off so great and so worthy a part of the creation, nor for ever bereave himself of the service of mankind, by keeping them like the devils in eternal defiance of himself, and under a necessity of abusing an immortal soul and an excellent nature, to the dishonours of sin, and the certainty of damnation: he was pleased to relax the rigours of justice, and after the terror of the sentence to issue out the promulgation of pardon; not only amiable in itself, but made so much more, by the vicinity of destruction.

Thus the darkness not only gives place, but also commendation to the day; the horrors of the night setting off the returns of the morning; and despair itself quickens the relish, and heightens the fruition of an after-deliverance.

Here therefore, in these words, we have God assuming to himself the most endearing description, arrayed with the robes of mercy, and holding forth the golden sceptre of pardon: the terrors of majesty being swallowed up in the sweetness of mercy, and justice disappearing in the abyss of compassion.

The words consist of these two parts.

I. A declaration of mercy, in these words, "There is forgiveness with thee."

II. The end of such a declaration, which is fear and obedience; "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

I. We shall begin with the former of these, *God's forgiveness;* which being here so signally attributed to God, certainly must needs carry in it something very great and notable. And the greatness of it we shall display in the consideration of these three things: 1. The principle from which it flows. 2. The sins that are the subject-matter of it. 3. The persons upon whom it shows and lays out itself.

1. For the first of these, the cause and principle from which this forgiveness proceeds. It is from God's εὐδοκία, from the free spontaneous motion of his good pleasure. Which, that we may make out the more clearly, it will require something a larger discussion.

We must here observe in the words of the text, that though some read it, *condonatio, forgiveness,* yet others read it *propitiatio,* which signifies *atonement;* and indeed the Greek is ἱλασμὸς, which signifies properly *propitiatio aut placatio.* And so the word imports both forgiveness itself, and the cause of it; which is an atonement through the satisfaction of a mediator.

It has been much disputed, whether God punishes sin freely, or by the necessity of his nature; so that he cannot, by a free act of pardon, pass it over without satisfaction.

And here the question is, not concerning God as he lies under

the present obligation of his own decree and word, by which he has positively declared that he will not acquit the guilty without satisfaction; for this engages him to do so upon the score of his veracity. But the question is, whether God, considered barely in his nature, without any engagement from his own word or decree, but merely by virtue of his justice, be so forced to punish sin, that without the interposal of a satisfaction, he cannot pardon it; or whether the exercise of his justice be so free, that by his absolute prerogative he may pardon it without any atonement.

There are arguments on both sides: but the best of the school-divines, and the greatest masters of controversy, so assert God's justice, as also to maintain his prerogative, by which he may at his pleasure either punish, or without satisfaction pardon the sinner.

And for this, amongst many other reasons, these may be given.

(1.) If it be free to God to remit the degrees of punishment, then it must be free for him also to remit the whole punishment. But the former all grant, and the consequence is evident, because every degree is of the same nature with the whole; and justice not only exacts punishment, but exacts it also in the very utmost degree: so that if God may dispense with one, he may by the same reason dispense with the other.

(2.) If God could show the highest act of mercy to the sinner, before any satisfaction was given him, then he might also pardon sin without it. The consequence is clear, because the highest act of mercy (if any thing) is sufficient for the pardon of sin: and that he could do the former is evident from this, that God first found out and provided a satisfaction for the sin of man, than which there could not be a higher instance of his love and mercy. Nay, it is greater goodness, upon his own free motion to provide the sinner with a satisfaction, than to pardon his sins, that satisfaction being made.

(3.) If God punished sin by a necessary egress of his justice, then he must punish it to the utmost that justice requires, and the utmost that the sin deserves. But this is evidently false; for so every man, upon the commission of his sin, without any delay or respite, must immediately be damned. The reason is, because sin deserves, that immediately, and upon the very first moment after its commission, execution be done upon the sinner.

(4.) Add to this, in the fourth place, that our sins are debts, but every creditor has absolute and free power, without any payment being made, to remit the debt, and discharge the debtor.

Besides, God being absolute sovereign, has power over his own law, to pardon any breach or violation of it. Neither as a governor is he bound to see the injury done to the community by the sin revenged by the punishment. For though earthly governors are obliged to this, yet God is not, because he is not,

as they are, only a trustee, but also the proprietor of all things under his government; so that there is no right of community distinct from his own. For as both the schoolmen and civilians most truly affirm, *In Deo sunt jura omnia.* And then nature asserts this freedom to every one, that he may quit and recede from his own right: for indeed he is sole and absolute lord and owner of it.

And thus I have proved God's natural freedom, either in punishing or forgiving sin; but yet as to the economy of God's present proceedings, we must know, that God, by his own word and decree, having tied up his liberty, he cannot now forgive sin without a satisfaction. And therefore, according to the various readings of the text, *propitiatio* must go before *condonatio;* and there must be *atonement* before there can be *forgiveness.*

But now there is a sect of men who peremptorily deny, that Christ satisfied God's justice for the sins of men: and, amongst other arguments, much insist upon this, that God is said freely to have forgiven us our sins. And they say, that a free forgiveness of sin, and a satisfaction for sin, are inconsistent, inasmuch as one excludes the other; for no man can be said freely to remit or pardon a debt, when the debtor, either by himself or his surety, has made him full payment.

In answer to this, it must be confessed, that the reconcilement of these two is not so easy as some may imagine. But all that either is or can be said in this matter amounts to this: that the forgiveness of our sins is not totally and in every respect a free pardon and remission. But only in respect of those from whom this satisfaction is not in their own persons exacted: now, inasmuch as they pay nothing to God's justice for their discharge, it is a free remission to them.

If it be replied, that it cannot be called a free remission, since as to the nature of a payment, it is all one whether it be made by a man in his own person, or in the person of his surety. To this I answer, that it is so when a man provides himself of a surety, and by his own means procures the payment. But here, since God freely of himself and by his own contrivance provides a surety for man, all that is done or paid by that surety is in respect of man a free remission. In short, when the creditor provides himself of a payment, without the least recourse or trouble to the debtor, it is as to the debtor a free absolution, at least equivalent to it.

And therefore, though God, in the pardon of sin, would so fairly comport with all his attributes, as to do it without injury or detriment to his justice; yet even in the satisfaction of that, he shows forth the glory of his other attribute, his mercy, in these two respects.

1st. In the relaxation of the law which required of every sinner a satisfaction in his own person. It did not only denounce

death to sin, but it ran thus: "The soul that sinneth shall die, and every man shall bear his own sin." But then God, by the prerogative of his mercy, was pleased to transfer the obligation, and to receive satisfaction from a surety. This was the first great instance of mercy.

2dly. The second was, that as he was pleased to be satisfied by a surety, so (as I have already shown) he himself found and provided this surety.

And certainly this was a glorious and unspeakable piece of mercy, a thing beseeming an infinite goodness.

For put the case; When man had sinned, and upon that sin stood obnoxious to the sentence of the law, and the fatal stroke of God's vindictive justice; had God stood forth, and, according to the first degree of mercy, made this agreement and capitulation with the sinner; and told him, that notwithstanding he had broken the law, affronted his justice, and so became liable to death, the punishment that the law awards to all transgressors, and that in their own persons; yet out of his free goodness, he would recede from the rigour of that law, and accept of a satisfaction from the hands of a surety. And therefore, if he should provide such a one, he should be discharged; otherwise he must expect to lie under the execution of that inexorable sentence.

What would man have done in this case? Here was mercy indeed, but infinitely short of his necessity. What should he do, whither should he go for some to bail him, much more to rescue and save him from the curse of the law, and the severity of his judge?

As for any thing that he could do himself, he could never be able to bribe or buy off an infinite justice. "Should he come before God with burnt-offerings, with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Should he give his first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul?" Why, yet all this would be as short of satisfaction, as it is of infinity.

He must therefore be forced to look abroad, and implore aid from some others; but from men he could have none: for as it is in Psalm xlix. 7, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." No creature had such an overplus of righteousness, as to lay it out for another, lest, as the wise virgins said to the foolish, in Matt. xxv. 9, "they have not enough for themselves." For all that they have is required of them; and so being due from themselves, they could not produce it to merit for another.

It would have passed the wisdom of men and angels, to have found out a mediator that might have paid the full debt to God's justice. For could any created invention have ascended up to heaven, and fetched the only begotten Son of God out of his Father's bosom? Could a finite understanding have contrived,

much less brought about the incarnation of a deity? clothed the Almighty with flesh and blood? and abased the King of kings to the form of a servant? Could we ever have thought of such a mediator, as might be both man, to enable him to suffer for us, and also God, to give an infinite value to his sufferings? as might have a human nature to undergo God's wrath, and also a divine, to keep him from sinking under it? Such a one, as might not only by his passive obedience loose the bands of death, and rescue us from hell, but also by his active righteousness entitle us to the joys of heaven.

Assuredly none but God, whose wisdom was as immense as his mercy, could have found out such a miraculous, stupendous means of our redemption.

But now, since God has been pleased to satisfy his injured justice, shall we therefore upbraid and detract from the freedom of his mercy? Cannot he vindicate one attribute, without eclipsing the glory of another?

See how the whole scripture almost sets forth and commends to us God's mercy and forgiveness, under this one endearing property of his freedom. In Rom. iii. 24, we are said to be "justified freely by his grace." Eph. i. 7, we are said to have received "forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." And in Matt. xviii., in the parable where the servant is brought in unable to pay a vast sum in which he was indebted to his lord, it is said in the 27th verse, that "his lord, being moved with mere compassion, loosed him and forgave him the debt." And in Isaiah lv. 1, where the graces and spiritual benefits which God confers upon his saints are set forth by wine and milk, and men are called upon to buy them, yet it is by a strange and a new way of purchase; "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Now if his very selling be so free, what then must be gift?

And thus much for the first thing in which the greatness of God's mercy in the forgiveness of sin shines forth; that the principle of it is his own free inclination; that no impulsive cause from without engages and induces him to it by any external impression. There can be no other reason assigned why God is merciful, but because he will be merciful. His mercy is like a fountain, which, though it flows freely and continually, yet there is no other cause of its flowing but it own fulness.

2. The second thing, from which we are to take an estimate of the greatness of this forgiveness, is the sins that are remitted.

Now the greatness of a pardon, as it relates to the sins and offences that are forgiven by it, is advanced according as they are heightend by these two properties: (1.) Number. (2.) Greatness.

(1.) For the first of these, they so far partake of this property of number, till they even contradict it, and become numberless.

David, who was none of the greatest sinners, yet finds the account of his sin in Psalm xl. 12, to amount to "more than the hairs of his head;" and certainly that is more than the head itself can number.

In Matt. xviii. 22, we shall find our Saviour stretching a human forgiveness to an offence seventy-seven times repeated. And certainly then the pardons that issue from an infinite mercy must needs keeps the distance of a suitable proportion.

And truly, if we come to compute the number, and to audit the account of our sins, from Gen. vi. 5, where the thoughts of man's heart are avouched to be evil, and only evil, and that continually; the sum total must swell to such a vast enormous multitude, that none can number them, but the same infinite God that forgives them.

In Prov. xxiv. 16, "the justest man living falls seven times a day;" a small proportion compared to the licentiousness of some sinners, who lash forth into criminal acts every moment. Yet to what a high reckoning will even this small proportion grow in the space of threescore years and ten, the common period of a man's life!

Yet when God comes to forgive, he cancels the entire bill, and by one act of grace dashes the whole hand-writing that is against us.

The soul of man is naturally restless, always doing something, whether in the retirements of thought and desire, or upon the open stage of practice; and where the heart is unsanctified, unrenewed by grace (as in most men of the world it is for some considerable part of their lives), there, so long as the soul is doing, it is doing evil: and that natural activity of the mind is as sinful as it is restless.

There is a tinder of concupiscence in all our natures, apt to catch at every spark that is struck from sinful objects. And we are surrounded with these, so that the constant emissions of the one, falling upon the ready receptions of the other, must needs make the flame continual.

Now where the faculty of sinning is restless, the opportunities to draw it forth perpetual, must not the sinful actions flowing from that faculty needs be innumerable? If there be a fire burning, and a bellows always blowing, certainly the sparks flying from it will be numberless.

We may be able to number our days, but not the sins committed in those days. This would baffle all our arithmetic, all our ciphers, and arts of computation. And I am afraid that we should stand at an infinite eternal distance from forgiveness, if God should promise to forgive us our sins only upon this condition, that we should first reckon them.

But now must not that forgiveness needs be glorious, which rises not only to the remission of talents, but of ten thousand

talents? that multiplies itself beyond what is numberless? that even outdoes our thoughts, and outruns our desires?

We may well fail in our expressions of it. But surely, when our sins are for number like the sands of the sea, or the stars of heaven; the mercy that forgives them must needs be deeper than the one, and higher than the other.

(2.) The second property of sins that heightens their forgiveness, is their greatness. We have compared them to stars for number, and they may equal them also for magnitude.

We have them painted out to us in their colours, Isaiah i. 18, with a crimson tincture, and a scarlet dye; with a redness and a blushing; sin thus wearing the colour of shame. Yet in the same verse we have forgiveness changing their hue to the whiteness of snow and the innocence of wool.

There is not usually any thing more provoking, or so hardly pardoned, as the contumely of words, and reviling language; and yet we have the divine mercy enlarging itself, even to a total remission of this, in Matt. xii. 31: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, except the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." Now blasphemy touches God in his honour, that is, in the apple of his eye, in that of which he is jealous, and in which he admits of no rival. And when God will put up such blows at our hands, such affronts, and such wounds inflicted upon his good name; it is a pardon peculiar to a divine nature, and which men may enjoy, indeed, but seldom imitate.

Again in 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, we have a muster-roll of as vile sinners as sin could make, or hell receive; "Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, extortioners." And yet the rear of all brought up with this in the 11th verse, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." And if so, you may be sure that they are also pardoned; for grace never purifies, but where it also pardons. Sanctification and justification are inseparable.

Now one would think that a milder punishment were a sufficient act of favour to such notorious criminals; and that a mitigation might pass for a pardon, where the sin seems too great for a total absolution. Yet as if God seemed to take advantage from our baseness, and by this providence permitted men to be such wretched sinners, that they might be fit materials for an infinite compassion; he passes over all, receives them into favour, and by his pardon makes them as free as those who never needed pardon: thus considering, not what was fit for them to obtain, but what was glorious for himself to do.

But now further to demonstrate the greatness of the sins which God remits, we must take the dimensions of them from the greatness of their object, which is no less than an infinite Majesty, the Lord of the universe, the glorious Maker and Governor of all things. And every affront to a king, greatens and enlarges, according to the condition of the person that is

offended; a blow given to majesty, an injury done to the throne, it is presently stamped with a new superscription: every offence is treason, and every stubbornness becomes rebellion.

Take in also the aggravations of the sin, that it was against the endearments of a creature, against him that gave the sinner a being, brought him out of nothing, gave him life and reason, a rational soul, and a free will; yea, to whom the sinner is beholden, even for this, that he is able to sin against him. But this is not all, it is also against the more obliging relation of a preserver: against him who continued and upheld that being, that he might have taken in forfeit for the breach of his law: against him that causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon his professed enemies; that sows their fields with plenty, and spreads their tables with abundance; and returns them one increase for another, the increase of blessing for the increase of sin.

So that now every sin which is committed by man, puts on the nature of that quality which comprehends in it all other instances of baseness, which is ingratitude. And if the sin be so great, the forgiveness must needs be proportionable.

And thus much for the second thing, in which is displayed to us the largeness of God's pardoning mercy; namely, the number and greatness of the sins pardoned by it.

3. The third thing in which it appears is, the persons on whom this pardon is conferred, who are men; that is, very worthless and inconsiderable creatures, in comparison of those to whom the same pardon is denied.

Those excellent and glorious spirits the angels, they fell without recovery: these glistering sons of the morning, those more lively representations of the divine nature, they are set under a perpetual night, never to rise and return again to their former lustre. As it is in the 6th verse of the epistle of Jude; "They are reserved under everlasting chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day." And in Heb. ii. 16, "Christ took not upon him the nature of angels, to be a mediator for them; but he took upon him the seed of Abraham."

Now that God should pass over the glory of the creation, and cast the skirt of his pardoning mercy upon poor vile creatures, that lay wallowing in their blood, to the loathing of their persons; that he should prefer dust and ashes before principalities and powers; and choose vessels of honour out of the lowest objects of contempt: this is an act of forgiveness, mixed of mercy and prerogative, and of which no reason can be assigned, but the good pleasure of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will.

It is as if a man should pass over and trample upon pearls, and in the mean time stoop down to take up pins: for the distance of the angelical and the human nature is as great, and their perfections fall under the same disproportion.

Certainly God could not intend the advancement of his service in this unequal proceeding; for correspondent to the creature's abilities, such will be the measure of his service. And could the narrow compass of human wit and power do as much for God, as the activity and intellectuals of an angel, who had none of these clogs of flesh and blood to allay their fervours and to slack their devotions, God would have been served without lassitude or weariness: for as it is in Psalm civ. 4, "he has made those ministering spirits a flaming fire;" and, therefore, they can be no more weary of serving him, than a fire can be weary with burning.

It remains, therefore, that this difference of God's dealing with men and angels, is entirely from the differences of his own purposes, by which he was pleased to design mercy for one, and to deny it to the other; and since he was free to have denied it, it enhances the kindness of the gift.

And thus I have done with the first general part of the text, viz. the declaration of the divine forgiveness; the greatness and latitude of which we have laid open, from those three several respects and considerations, by which all pardons are to be measured.

II. Pass we now therefore to the second part of the words, *the end and design of this forgiveness, the fear of God:* "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

In which we are to do these two things:

1. To show what that fear is, which is here intended.

2. To show what there is in this forgiveness, by way of reason or argument, to enforce this fear.

1. For the first of these, we must distinguish of a double fear.

(1.) An anxious, distracting, amazing fear; in respect of which, Moses, upon the sight of God, in the terrible and fiery promulgation of the law, from mount Sinai, in Heb. xii. 21, said, "I exceedingly fear and tremble." In respect of this also, David says, in Psalm cxix. 120, "I am afraid of thy judgments." Such a one also was it that possessed Christ in his agony, and in the time of his dereliction, when he cried out upon the cross, Matt. xxvii. 46, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In short, it is such a kind of fear as possesses those who lie under the tortures of a guilty troubled conscience; such a one into which is infused all the malignity of this afflicting passion. It is the first-fruits of despair, and may, with more significance, be called horror and distraction.

Now this cannot be the fear intended in the words; for the motive of this cannot be forgiveness, but the divine wrath and anger. Besides, the proper effect of this fear is not duty, but despair; not obedience, but affrightment; not an adherence to

God, but a flight and a departure from him. But now we shall presently show, that the fear spoken of in the words, is to be a sovereign means of duty, an argument of piety, and an instrument of obedience.

(2.) There is a slavish and servile fear; such a one as, Rom. viii. 15, is called "the spirit of bondage." And in respect of which, John says, 1 John iv. 18, that "he that fears is not perfect:" and in the same verse, that "love casts out fear." As, on the contrary, where this fear is predominant, it expels and casts out love: for there is so direct a contrariety between these two affections, that the increase of one is always built upon the decrease of the other. And indeed fear, for the most part, is the cause of hatred, but always the concomitant.

Now this cannot be the fear that is meant in the text; for God hates that his service should proceed from this principle. Fear properly, both in a natural and a spiritual sense, contracts the heart: but it must be an enlarged heart, that runs the ways of God's commandments. Fear ties up the spirits, checks the freedom, and dulls the motion of a more active devotion.

(3.) And lastly; therefore there is a filial, reverential fear, such a one as is enlivened with a principle of love, quickened and acted with that contrary affection, that is in Rom. viii. 15, styled "the spirit of adoption."

Now there is this difference between these three sorts of fear; that the first is properly the fear of a malefactor, the second of a slave, and this last of a son; which is that alone that is designed in these words: and indeed there is good reason that God should require it, since he intends to turn his servants into sons. And is it not equal to require a son's affection, where he resolves to bestow a son's inheritance?

Besides, this affection is of all others the most sedulous, diligent, and serviceable, and therefore there is a more than ordinary significance in those words, Mal. iii. 17, where God is said to "spare and pity those that fear him, as a man spareth his son that serveth him." There is a great deal of difference between the service of a son, and of a slave or hireling; it is done with more accurateness, more concernment and activity.

And if we consider well the scope of the words, we must acknowledge that the word *fear* is used here by a metonymy of the cause for the effect, and signifies rather that obedience which is the effect and product of this fear; God therefore manifesting his forgiveness, that he may gain the creature's service and obedience.

For it is this only that God regards, this alone by which the creature owns and confesses his homage and subjection to his Maker. All other pretences vanish into air and nothing, as being neither available to God's glory nor man's salvation.

And thus I have shown of what stamp, what kind, that fear is,

which is intended in the words. It is such a one as is qualified with a prevailing mixture of love; such a one as does not shake, but settle the soul; not terrify, but compose the mind. And lastly, it is such a one as does not cramp and restrain our operative faculties; but shines in duty, and displays itself in performance.

Having thus shown what the fear is, that stands mentioned in the text;

2. I come now to the second thing proposed, which is to show how God's forgiveness may be an argument to enforce this fear. And it does it in these two respects.

(1.) Because the neglect of the fear of God, upon supposal that he has forgiven us our sins, is highly disingenuous.

Forgiveness is an after-game of mercy; a thing that the first rigours of the law neither knew nor admitted. It stood upon the narrow precipice of exact obedience, or certain damnation. It was all severity, without the least allay of mercy. It was a thunder without lightning. Mercy was a miracle that Moses never showed; and pardon an absurdity in the documents of mount Sinai.

But man not being able to come up to the command, the gentle compliances of mercy were pleased to bring down the command to us, and to allow *tabulam post naufragium*, repentance and forgiveness to stand in the breach, and to supply the impossibilities of indefective obedience.

But shall we now turn our table into a snare, and offend because we may be forgiven, and so make the sinner's asylum an argument for the sin? Shall we kick at our father's bowels, only because they can relent? This is impiety heightened into inhumanity, such a behaviour as even good-nature would detest between man and man, in which we treat our Redeemer below the endearments of a friend.

The sum of all must be this: had not God been merciful, he had not been dishonoured; and sin had not abounded, but by the antiperistasis of grace. Pardon is made a decoy to the crime, and a possibility to be saved trepans into a certainty of being damned.

(2.) The second reason is, because the neglect of God's fear upon the account of his forgiveness, besides the disingenuity of it, is also most provoking and dangerous.

There is nothing that any person disgusts with so keen and tender a resentment, as the rejections of his love, and the abuse of his favour.

There is something in God's greatness, majesty, and justice, that may indeed terrify and command, but it cannot endear: but the caresses of love and pardon should make a closer insinuation, and attract the very heart; whereas the other, perhaps, only tie the hands.

Justly, therefore, does God's jealousy burn where his love is despised; and one flame kindle, to revenge the contempt of another.

Because God has shown himself so much a father, shall he therefore cease to be a master? Shall his condescensions to us take away our honour to him?

Truly, he that sins against the first Mosaical dispensation of an inflexible law, and he that takes heart to offend because of the gracious allowances of forgiveness and restoration, differ as much as he who sins against a prince's justice, and he who sins against his acts of indemnity.

The economy of God's attributes is such, that from some of them we may appeal to others; but there are some again, from which there lies no appeal. As when the divine power and justice threaten us, there is yet a refuge in his mercy; but he that is bankrupt upon the score of mercy, has no other relief to rest upon. He has sinned against his last remedy; he has poisoned himself with a cordial; he has stumbled at that stone upon which he should have built. When compassion condemns us, who shall be our advocate!

Now from the words hitherto discussed, we may make these two deductions.

1. We may learn hence the different nature of Christ's spiritual kingdom, from all other kingdoms in the world; and that not only in respect of the external administration of it, that it is not bolstered out with pomp and show, and other little assistances of grandeur and secular artifice; but chiefly in respect of that which is the main instrument and hinge of government and subjection, the fear of the subject.

Where there is no fear, there can be no government, that is certain. But how does Christ work this? Why, not by the rack, the prison, or the sword of justice, but by new, strange, and supernatural methods of pardon and compassion. His goodness shall bind our hands; and his very forgivenesses shall make us fearful to offend.

But how incongruous an argument would this be to an earthly potentate, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared!" Who ever was formidable for his pardons? and who ever was great and secure, that was not formidable?

Such is the baseness of men, that from impunity, they take occasion rather to insult than to obey; and being forgiven, look upon their prince's forgiveness rather as a spoil extorted from his fear, than as a favour issuing from his goodness.

Guilt is eternally suspicious; and suspicion, even after a pardon, will be still standing upon its guard, still in a posture of defence; neither will it ever think itself sufficiently defended, till it has ruined and removed the injured person, whom its own unworthiness makes it fear. He that receives an injury may pardon it; but he that first does the injury is irreconcilable.

But how comes Christ then to state so sure a subjection upon so different a ground? and why do not men, when they have offended him, for ever after hate him; and having once presumed, for the future despair? Why, it is because he is God, the great Creator of the heart, and so at his pleasure can change it: and by the secret energy of his Spirit, conquer it in its strongest notions and inclinations. This is the only way by which he reconciles the sinner to himself. And so may any earthly prince make his enemies become his friends, when he can get the power of changing man's nature, but hardly before.

2. We may learn from hence, upon what ground every man is to build the persuasion of the pardon of his sins. It is the temper of most persons, to be more busy about their assurance than their obedience; and to be confident of their reward, while they should be solicitous about their duty.

But now to discover whether such men's confidence be sound and rational, or vain and fallacious, I should recommend to them this one criterion and mark of trial; namely, to reflect upon and consider what effects this persuasion of God's mercy works upon their spirits. Do they find that it begets in them a greater tenderness to displease God, a greater caution and circumspection in their behaviour? a greater abhorrency of sin, and a more ardent inclination to virtue? Do they find that the more confident they are of God's mercy, the more fearful they are to offend the pure eyes of his holiness? If so, they have great cause to conclude that these persuasions are not mere delusions, but the attestation of God's Spirit to their spirits, transcribing the decree of heaven upon their hearts, in the great designs of their salvation.

But if men, from the persuasions of mercy, grow impudent and bold in sin, presume upon God's patience, and venture far upon the stock of a supposed forgiveness, they must know that they are under the power of a destructive infatuation. Mercy was never intended to serve any man in his vice, to smooth him in his sin, and by abused hopes of pardon, to strengthen the hands of his corruption. And therefore, he that from God's mercy gathers no argument for his fear, may conclude thus much, that there is indeed forgiveness with God, but no forgiveness for him.

SERMON XXVIII.

A PERCEIVING HEART THE GIFT OF GOD.

[Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, on Sept. 12, 1658, a few days after Cromwell's death, who died on the 3d instant before.]

Deut. xxix. 4.

Yet the Lord has not given you an heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear unto this day.

To complete the sense of the words, we must have recourse to the two precedent verses; which being compared with the text, present us with a description of such a brutish and irrational temper, such an invincible hardness, as is not to be found in any people mentioned throughout the whole book of God, or any history whatsoever. Israel, the peculiar inheritance of God, the darlings of heaven; yet by their strange deportment under God's dealings, may leave this report of themselves, that they were the greatest enjoyers and the greatest abusers of mercy that ever lived.

The whole story of the transactions between God and them, is a continued miracle. On God's side there is strange unheard-of power and goodness, on theirs a prodigious unheard-of stupidity. Here we have miracles of strength and wisdom, there we have miracles of disobedience. None ever possessed mercy so much to the reproach of mercy as they did. Miracles are the rarities and the reserves of heaven, kept to bear testimony to the power of God, and to convince men when a contemplation of his works in the ordinary course of nature will not serve turn. Yet God was pleased to make these common with his people, that he might engage their hearts to him beyond all plea of unbelief. He delivered them by miracles, in Exod. xiv. 29. He led and guided them by miracles, Exod. xiii. 21. He fed them by miracles, Exod. xvi. 13, 17. He clothed them by miracles, Deut. xxix. 5. And, what was the greatest and the crowning miracle of all, he did not consume them in the midst of their frequent rebellions. Yet they had hardness and unbelief enough to encounter all these dealings; they still remained the same, a perverse, obstinate people, whose neck (as the Spirit's expression is) was an iron sinew, and their brow brass. In short, the bare report and fame of those miracles made many proselytes and converts, the very sight whereof could not convert them. It will not be amiss to take a short survey of their strange unreasonable unbelief in some particular passages of it. When God had delivered them

out of Egypt by an outstretched arm, by such wonders as never were before, nor ever since: and while the memory of these was yet fresh upon their mind, even then upon the pursuit of Pharaoh they distrust and murmur, Exod. xiv. 11. Hence David puts such a repeated emphasis upon this, in Psalm cvi. 7, "They provoked him at the Red sea, even at the Red sea." As if the same power that could deliver them from an enemy, when he actually possessed them, could not rescue them from him when he only pursued them. After this deliverance they murmur for meat; "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Psalm lxxviii. 19. Can God? They question not only his will, but his power, of which they had an immediate experience. Well, God gives them meat, even the bread of angels, and then they murmur for flesh: Psalm lxxviii. 20, "Can he provide flesh also for his people?" Still they doubt of his power; they live upon it one day, and they question it the next. An interchange of mercies on God's part and murmurings on theirs, was the continual custom and manner of their whole life. But the most horrid, and almost incredible passage of their unbelief, was when, after all the wonders, both in Egypt and out of Egypt, when Moses had but only turned his back; as if in Moses they had lost their God, as if he had been the only deity they acknowledged, and all their worship and religion had been directed to his person: in his absence they address themselves to Aaron, with this impious absurd argument, "Moses is gone, therefore make us gods," Exod. xxxii. 1. I am confident, if an intelligent infidel should read this history, the miracles here mentioned would not seem so improbable to him, as their carriage and behaviour upon these miracles. From the consideration of this, Moses might here very well proem the repetition of the covenant with this upbraiding reprehension; "The Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear." Which words are only an increpation of them, not any reflection upon God, as shall appear afterwards.

As for the explication of the words, I suppose I need not tell you, that they cannot be understood strictly according to the letter: for if God had given them no bodily eyes to see, nor ears to hear, they had not had sin: but because they saw bodily, and were blind spiritually, herein the sin of their obstinacy did consist.

We have here several phrases, but they all concentre in the same signification. "A heart to perceive, eyes to see, and ears to hear." It is a pleonasm, a figure usual in scripture, by a multiplicity of expressions to signify some one notable thing: so that from this congeries of similary words, we may collect the exceeding stupidity and total ignorance of the Jews, in apprehending the divine dispensations.

Or, secondly, we may refer these several expressions to those

several means which God suited to every apprehensive faculty of their soul. He proposed an excellent law to their understanding or their heart; he declared himself in prodigious miracles visible to the eye; he spoke to them in a wonderful manner from mount Sinai in thunders, and a voice audible to the ear. He did, as I may so speak, lay siege to every faculty, if through any one of them he might force his convictions into the soul. He proposed that which might win the eyes and inform the ear, and that which might strike the understanding through both; but nothing could find entrance, where the doors both of sense and reason were shut through gross unbelief.

And thus we see the words have no difficulty in them; they will afford these observations.

1st *Observ.* That the heart may remain unaffected and unconvinced in the midst of convincing means.

That this is so, scripture and experience leave it beyond dispute. But the reason why it is so is this: because the clearness and perspicuity of the object does not at all supply or repair the defects of the faculty. The goodness and excellency of the things proposed to be understood and embraced, do not give any ability to a hard heart, to apprehend or embrace them: as the most visible conspicuous thing contributes no power to a weak indisposed eye to discern it.

Now I term these means convincing, 1. Because they do actually convince some, although they miscarry in others. 2. Because they have a fitness or aptitude to convince all.

2nd *Observ.* Issuing from the words is this:

That such a frame of spirit, such a perceiving heart as enables the soul to apprehend and improve the means of grace, is totally and entirely the free gift of God: "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive." It is a product of that mercy which has no argument but itself. I say it is a free gift, and that,

1. In respect of the motive, which is the mere compassion of God; there is nothing in man that could engage God to bestow grace upon him. We are by nature wholly in a state of sin and enmity against God; and how these qualifications should merit grace at his hands, I know not, unless, by an unheard-of strange antiperistasis, the most hateful object should excite an act of the greatest love.

2. It is free, in respect of the persons upon whom it is conferred. When God comes first to work upon us, we are presented to him in the lump, all equally odious, equally desirable. And that God gives grace to one, and denies it to another, it is not from any precedent difference in them; for it is only the gift and grace of God which makes them to differ. But as God's decree in choosing Jacob, and rejecting Esau, is most free and without relation to any good or evil done by them; so the execution of that decree in conferring grace upon one, and withholding it from the other, is equally free and irrespective.

3rd *Observ.* arising from the words, which I intend more fully to prosecute, is this:

That God's denial of such a disposition of soul, such a perceiving heart, does certainly infer the unsuccessfulness of all the means of grace.

I say, it does infer it, not cause it, as I shall demonstrate by and by.

In the handling of this, I shall show,

I. What is meant by God's giving to the soul a perceiving heart.

II. Whence it is, that without this gift the soul cannot make any saving improvement of the means of grace.

III. I shall show, that although upon God's denial of a perceiving heart, the soul does inevitably remain unprofitable under the means of grace, so as not to hear nor perceive; yet this hardness or unprofitableness cannot at all be ascribed to God as the author of it.

IV. I shall show how God can rationally reprehend a soul for not embracing the means of grace, when he denies it a heart, by which alone it can be enabled so to do. The necessity of clearing this, I take from the strain of the words, which run in the nature of a reprehension; and this always supposes a fault as the ground and foundation of it. But if God denies a hearing ear and a perceiving heart, it may seem not to be the soul's fault, if it does not hear nor perceive.

Having despatched these in their order, I shall proceed to the uses that may be drawn from hence.

I. Concerning the first, *what is meant by God's giving to the soul a perceiving heart.* We have grace here set out by such acts as are properly acts of knowledge; as understanding, seeing, hearing; not because, as some imagine, grace is placed only in the understanding, which, being informed with such a principle, is able to govern, and practically to determine the will, without the help of any new principle infused into that. For grace is a habit equally placed in both these faculties, but it is expressed by the acts of the understanding:

1. Because the understanding has the precedency and first stroke in holy actions, as well as in others; it is the head and fountain from whence they derive their goodness, the leading faculty: and therefore the works of all the rest may, by way of eminence, be ascribed to this, as the conquest of an army is ascribed to the leader only, or general.

2. Because the means of grace are chiefly and most frequently expressed by the word *truth;* 1 Tim. i. 15, "This is a faithful (or a true) saying, that Christ came into the world to save sinners." And in John iii. 33, "He that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true." And in John xvii. 17, "Thy word

is truth." Now, since the understanding is that faculty whose proper office it is to close in with truth as such, the receiving or embracing the means of grace, which are called *truth*, is most properly set forth by the acts of the understanding.

I shall now endeavour to show, from some places in scripture, what is to be here understood by "a perceiving heart," and "a hearing ear." John vi. 45, "Every one that hath heard and learned of my Father, cometh unto me." Such a hearing of God's will as is attended with the learning of it, such a learning of it as powerfully brings the soul to God, is that alone which Christ esteems effectual. John v. 25, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Such a hearing as enlivens a dead soul, as conveys into it a spiritual vigour, declaring itself in spiritual operations; this only in God's account is hearing. Again in Acts ii. 37, "When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" To hear, so as to be thoroughly and deeply affected with a sense of sin, so as to be put upon an immediate inquiry and endeavour for the securing our eternal state; this is properly "to hear and to perceive." To hear, so as in practice to follow and prosecute the things we hear; this only is hearing in a scripture sense. Thus Moses is said to have hearkened to his father-in-law, because he followed his counsel; and Rehoboam is said not to have hearkened to his old counsellors, because he never practised their advice. In short, in Matthew xiii. we have an account of the nature of hearing, which then only is true and genuine, when it ends in "the bringing forth of fruit." Wherefore so to hear God's will as spiritually to understand it; so to understand it, as to be really affected with it; so to entertain it in our affections, as to manifest it in our actions; and so to act as to continue in a steady fruitful perseverance, is that alone that can justly be reputed hearing; otherwise, upon a defect of these, it is all one to the soul, as if it had not heard at all; nay, in some respects much worse.

From hence, therefore, I collect,

1. That to understand and receive the word, according to the letter and notion, by a bare assent to the truth of it, is not to have a heart to perceive nor an ear to hear: because it is evident, both from scripture and ordinary observation, that such a reception of the means of grace, is not always attended with these spiritual effects: as for instance, the Jews heard Christ and admired him, but afterwards they rejected his doctrine and crucified his person. Who more versed in the law and the oracles of God than the scribes and pharisees? yet we may easily gather from the whole course of our Saviour's carriage towards them, that he looked upon them as men ignorant of God. The papists indeed make saving faith to be only an assent of the understanding to gospel-truths; according to whose tenets a man may believe like

a saint, and practise like a devil. In short, there is nothing more common than to see men of rare knowledge and raised speculations in the things of God, yet not at all to have any relish and savour of them upon their hearts and affections. So that their practices oftentimes bid defiance to their knowledge; for they never knew God, so as to obey him; and therefore, in effect, never knew him at all. To hear the word of God, and to hear God speaking in his word, are things vastly different.

2. Therefore, in the second place, to have a perceiving heart and a hearing ear, is to have a spiritual light begot in the mind, by an immediate overpowering work of the Spirit, whereby alone the soul is enabled to apprehend and discern the things of God spiritually, and to practise them effectually: and without this, we may see and see, and never perceive; and hear again and again, and never understand. Christ may discourse with us as he did with those two disciples going to Emmaus, and in the mean time our eyes may be so held, as not to discern him. For, as the apostle says, "The natural man cannot apprehend these things, because they are spiritually discerned." And the reason of this is clear, even from nature; because in order to apprehension, there must be a peculiar suitableness between the object and the faculty. Things sensible must be apprehended by sense; things intelligible, by the understanding and the reason: and so things spiritual, by some spiritual principle that is infused into the soul from above. And look, as the inferior faculty cannot apprehend the proper formal objects of the superior, sense cannot reach up to the things of reason; so neither can reason take in or perceive those objects which properly belong to this spiritual principle. Hence it is, that some souls can discern that spiritual, secret, persuading force in the word, that shall strongly engage and almost constrain the affection to embrace and follow it: so that the whole man is insensibly fashioned and moulded into it, while others, void of this spiritual discerning faculty, feel no such force and power in it. Some also, from the help of this, spy out that true loveliness and beauty in the ways of God, as to enamour them to a practice of them, and that even with delight: while others, void of this power, do indeed see and behold those ways, but see no beauty in them, why they should desire them. Hence two sit together, and hear the same sermon; one finds a hidden spiritual virtue in the word, by which he lives, and grows, and thrives: another finds no such extraordinary virtue in it, but if it be rationally and well composed, it pleases his reason, and there's an end. And this proceeds from the want of a spiritual perceiving heart. As for instance, whence is it that a man is so affected with music, that all the passions of his mind and blood in his body is moved at the hearing of it; and the stupid brutes not at all pleased? but because in man there is a principle of reason concurring with his sense, which discovers

that sweetness and harmony in those sounds, that bare sense is not able to discern. Thus it is proportionably between mere reason, and reason joined with a spiritual discernment, in respect of spiritual things. And so I have endeavoured in some measure to display the nature of "a perceiving heart and a hearing ear." But the truth is, when we have spoken the utmost concerning it that we can, yet those only can know what it is who have it: as he only knows what it is to see, who can see. As the groans, so also the graces of the Spirit are unutterable. Grace is known by its own evidence. It is the white stone shining to him only that does possess it; for a man is no more able to express this work, so as to convey a full notion of it to the mind of him that has it not, than by words and discourse to convey an idea of colours to him who was born blind, or the proper relish of meats to him who has no taste.

II. *Whence it is, that without this gift of a perceiving heart, the soul cannot make any improvement of the means of grace.* It arises from these two reasons,

1. From its exceeding impotence and inability to apprehend these things. 2. From its contrariety to them.

1. It cannot close with the means, because of its impotence to apprehend them. Reason attended with the highest improvements of art and endowments of nature, is not able to search into the things of God; it may indeed dive into them so as to drown itself, but never so as to find and apprehend them. For if it be so posed and nonplussed in pursuing the knowledge of natural causes, that the greatest philosophers, after all their search into these things, are forced to sit down in confusion and disagreement; I say, if nature thus falter in earthly things, how will it be able to reach heavenly, between which there is a greater distance than between earth and heaven? If it be also so much to seek in the disquisition of moral truths, that few can agree in stating what is the greatest good, but one says virtue, another pleasure; I say, how then can it be able to comprehend truth spiritual, which as far surpasses the most elevated morality, considered as such, as that transcends the gross dictates of the most swinish sensuality? Every spiritual truth, as spiritual, so far it is also mysterious. Nature is weak, and feeble, and blind, when it comes to the mysteries of faith; it never appears so weak, as when by its own strength it attempts the understanding of these. Nature prying into spirituals, is like Pompey, a heathen, looking into the ark of God; seeing indeed, but not understanding. There is a certain secret of the Lord, locked up from the view of bare reason; and it is only with them that fear him. See in what a posture of weakness the Spirit presents a natural understanding, John i. 5, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." Let the light shine round about him who is blind, yet the darkness which he carries about him

hinders him from perceiving it. Sooner may a dark room enlighten itself, without the irradiation of a candle or the sun, than a natural understanding work out its own ignorance, in matters of faith. The Spirit says expressly, that a man in this state "cannot know the things of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14. There is an impotence rising into an impossibility. Again, in 2 Cor. iii. 5, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing." A good thought is the lowest strain of piety, but the first step to grace; yet we see it is higher than nature can rise unto. How is a natural understanding towering, and pleasing itself in the ornaments and riches of its own notions! yet represented by the Spirit, as "poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. Come to Nicodemus with a gospel-mystery, make it out to him by the most obvious similitudes in nature, yet how is that great doctor void of a heart to perceive, and an ear to hear! Instead of understanding and assenting to it, he will reply upon you, "How can these things be?" They seem to him absurd, irrational, impossible: and whosoever searches into the great things of the gospel, by the bare strength of reason, he will find that, like Nicodemus, he comes to Christ in the dark. Wherefore, if in the judgment of the Spirit of truth itself, the best of human knowledge, when it ventures upon the things of God, is no more than weakness, insufficiency, and wretched blindness; then for ever let it sit down in its own darkness, and deplore its impotence and inability, and not wonder that it is unable savingly to perceive, hear, or see, the great depths of the gospel. Those expressions usual amongst us, *strength of parts, force of reason,* since the ruins of a broken crippled nature, are solecisms in divinity, no where the language of the scripture. It was Adam's doom to return to the earth, and his soul fell to the ground first. But now that our not perceiving nor discerning the things of God proceeds from the impotence of our own hearts, and not from any obscurity or unfitness to be understood in the things themselves, is apparent, and that from the forementioned John i. 5, where these things are called *a light, a shining light,* and therefore most easily to be seen, if it was not for our own darkness. The most refined and the sublimest beings are the most intelligible. It is God's nature to dwell in light, but it is our weakness that makes that light inaccessible: as the fruit that grows upon the top branches, the highest boughs of all, is the fairest and the sweetest, if we could but reach it.

The great disproportion between our intellect and these things, is the cause that we cannot apprehend them. Every such truth has a brightness to dim, and a largeness to exceed the understanding; as the sun is both too bright and too great for the eye. What master of reason or subtlety is able to unriddle the mysteries of the gospel? to track the mysterious workings of the Spirit in conviction and conversion? Sooner may we spy out

the motions of the wind, from whence it comes and whither it goes: and view the first conception, and observe the growth of an infant in the womb, which the Spirit mentions as a thing impossible, than to comprehend these wonders: things fitter to amaze, than to inform a natural understanding.

2. The second reason why the soul cannot make any saving improvement of the means of grace, without this special gift of a perceiving heart, is because of its contrariety to these things. And there are two things in the soul, in which this contrariety chiefly consists. 1. Carnal corruptions. 2. Carnal wisdom.

(1.) Concerning the contrariety that arises from carnal corruption, it is expressed in the scripture by the greatest that can be, namely, that contrariety which is between enemies; yea, and such a one as breaks out into an open war: "I have a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and leading me captive into the law of sin," Rom. vii. 23. Paul speaks this in his own person. Now if concupiscence is so strong as to captivate him at some turns, who was truly changed and sanctified, how then will it reign and rage, by a strong opposition of the things of God, in such a person as is yet unchanged and unsanctified! Concupiscence domineers in most men, and it is lively in the best. As for the seat of it, it is placed in the sensitive part of man, and, therefore, according to the regular tenor and state of nature, was made to serve, and to be subject to reason: but we know that since sin entered into the world, it has got the dominion over it; and hence, as from a ruler, we read of its laws, "the law of the members." Now there is no such tyrant as a servant, when he steps into dominion. Hereupon the sensitive appetite, with so much fury, commands the whole man to fulfil its lusts, it outfaces and tramples upon all the commands of reason to the contrary. Whence we argue for the truth in hand thus: If concupiscence so much opposes the dictates of human reason, which are much inferior in purity and strictness to the spiritual injunctions of the gospel, then with how much stronger a prejudice must it resist these! For if the yoke that reason puts upon sin be heavy, that which the gospel puts upon it is much heavier. If reason prohibits the actions of concupiscence, upon the score of inconvenience, the gospel does it upon pain of eternal damnation. As for the works of carnal concupiscence, the apostle gives us a catalogue of them in Gal. v. 19, 20, "The works of the flesh are envyings, strife, and emulation; uncleanness, drunkenness, and the like." Now let us make a particular accommodation of gospel precepts to each of these, and see what an entertainment they are like to find in a heart that is held in captivity under such lusts. Christ, in the gospel, says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 29. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you," Matt. v. 44. Can we now imagine that this can

suit the humour of a wrathful, contentious person, who is so far from blessing those who curse him, that he is often ready to curse those who bless and befriend him? Again, Christ says, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?" John v. 44. And, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant," Matt. xx. 26. Is it possible for an envious, emulous man, in his heart to approve, or in his practice to follow this precept of humility? Could he by a voluntary condescension stoop to be a servant, whose continual desire and restless endeavour it is, to be great in the world? Again, Christ enjoins watching and praying to such as are his disciples, Matt. xxvi. 41. For it is clear that this command is general, though delivered to particular persons, because the reason of it was general, "that ye enter not into temptation," which equally concerns all. But can the unclean, sensual epicure brook the excellency of this precept? can he like the rigour of these duties? will he break his sleep, or spend any portion of the night in reading and wrestling with God in prayer, who never watches but to serve his cups and his intemperance? Every such precept proposed to concupiscence is a pearl cast before a swine: it can find no admission with such a man as is led and ruled by his corruption. It is above his principles, and so he cannot apprehend it. It is contrary to his appetite, and so he cannot receive it.

(2.) The second thing from whence this contrariety arises, is carnal wisdom, which carries in it a greater opposition to the means of grace than the former; inasmuch as there is more hope of the conversion of a sensualist, than of a resolved atheist. For since the notions of carnal wisdom are more refined, and always seem to wear the face of reason, which has more to say for itself than concupiscence has or can have; hence it is, that one thus principled is more hardly convinced than another. In this chiefly are reared those strong holds and principalities, which stand out against the workings of the Spirit: "The carnal mind is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. The subtlety of the world loathes the simplicity of the gospel: hence, in the number of those who are to be saved, we have "not many wise, not many great, not many noble," 1 Cor. i. 26. And for the most part these are the men who are so much acted by this carnal wisdom. Such men are usually too wise and politic to be saved. The cross of Christ is to the Greek, to the learned Athenian, foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. He cannot find any convincing reason, why a man should prefer duty before interest; despise the splendour of worldly enjoyments, to assume a cross. Policy, the great idol of a carnal reason, is that which insensibly works the soul to a despisal of religion. We have an exact account of that temper of mind, that indifference in things spiritual, that it usually begets in the

minds of its worldly-wise followers, Act xviii.; when a controversy about religion was brought before Gallio, a Roman deputy, it is said in the 17th verse, "But Gallio cared for none of these things." Now that in which carnal wisdom and religion stand at an eternal distance is this, that the design of religion is continually to urge a denial of itself; but all the maxims of carnal wisdom tend to, and terminate in the advancement of self. It is this alone that is more amiable than either the practice or the rewards of holiness. Purity must here give place to profit: love of present possessions outweighs the hope of future felicity. From this principle also proceed those hideous maxims, that religion is only a politic invention, a lackey to government; that the appearance of it is advantageous, but the substance hurts. Hence are these expressions of a known author in his heathenish politics; that good men, advanced to government, must of necessity defend themselves and those they govern by deceit and violence: that a Christian, living under a heathen magistrate, may deny Christ in word, so he does acknowledge him in his heart; the nature of faith being internal, and lodged in the mind, and not at all depending on outward professions. These pestilent sayings, issuing from the fountain of carnal wisdom, sufficiently show what a cursed abhorrence it has to a submission to spiritual gospel truths. Now this principle is more or less in all men; every man is naturally wise to catch hold of any present enjoyment, rather than venture his happiness upon expectation. There is none that will forsake father or mother, the least piece of the world, the most inconsiderable profit or pleasure, that he may secure an interest in Christ, and in the great things of the gospel, if he should be ruled by the guidance of his carnal wisdom. From hence it is clear, that there is such a fixed antipathy in nature against the spirituality of the ways of God, that unless it be wrought out by the Spirit's giving us a new heart to perceive, and eyes to see, there is no possibility of ever reconciling these together.

III. I proceed to the third thing, which is to show, that *although upon God's denial of a perceiving heart, the soul does inevitably remain unprofitable under the means of grace, so as not to hear nor perceive; yet this hardness, or unprofitableness, cannot at all be ascribed to God as the author of it.* In order to the clearing of this, we must know, that God's "not giving a heart to perceive," may admit of a double acceptation.

1. As it implies only a bare denial of grace.
2. As it does also include a positive act of induration.

1. Now as for the first, God cannot be said to cause our rejection of the means of grace, that ensues upon the denial of a perceiving heart; because this denial is not the cause of that rejection, but the immediate sinfulness of the heart that resists

grace. This rejection, this not hearing, follows indeed upon the denial of grace, certainly, and of necessity; but then it follows only by way of certain consequence, and not of causal influence. As when a thing is falling, if nobody reaches forth, and stands to catch it, and stop the motion, it must of necessity fall to the ground; yet the not reaching out of the hand, is not the cause of its falling: it adds no impulse to it, but the inherent gravity of the thing is the only cause of the motion, which, if not hindered, will certainly carry it so far. In short, God's denial of grace gives the same necessity to our not hearing, not perceiving the word of God, that the divine prescience, or foreknowledge, gives to free actions; that is, a necessity in respect of the event and future existence of the action, not in respect of the power producing it. That is, there is a certain connexion between God's denial of "a heart to perceive," and our not perceiving: if he gives us not such a heart, the event and issue will certainly be, that we shall not perceive nor understand. But in the mean time, it puts no necessity upon the power; it does not by any physical influence determine that to a necessary suspension of the acts of perceiving and understanding. Wherefore, since the denial of grace does only infer, not cause the soul's unprofitableness; God, who is the cause of this denial, is not also the cause of this unprofitableness.

2. And herein the chief difficulty does consist, how God can by a positive act harden the heart, and yet not be the cause of those sins that issue from that hardness. I shall here premise that for a truth, that a learned divine, in his treatise of Predestination and the Grace of God, lays down as a previous consideration to that work;—That God is just, even when we are not able to comprehend the manner how he is just. His infinite justice is not be measured by the standard of those frail shallow notions, which men have of justice; but it transcends them as far as his nature transcends ours. But to the matter in hand, we must here first note, that the "not hearing, not perceiving," mentioned in the text, are not bare sins of omission, and a mere privation of these acts? but they are rather positive sins, implying an active resistance, a disapprobation and a rejection of the means of grace. Now we are to show how the righteous God can actively harden the heart to a producing of such actions. Certain it is, that he does not infuse or beget any evil disposition in the heart, which may incline or determine it to such actions. We may observe therefore, that there are three ways whereby God may be said to harden the heart to sin.

(1.) God affords a general influence or concurrence to those persuasions or suggestions, whereby Satan or sinful men may endeavour to bring others to sin, so far as those persuasions or suggestions are natural acts; there being no positive thing, in the production of which the first cause has not a share.

(2.) God, in his providential rule of all things, disposes and offers such objects and occasions, which, though good in themselves, yet concurring with a corrupt heart, have a fitness to educe that corruption into act. As his putting David into such a condition of misery, and by his providence causing him to pass that way where he should meet with Shimei. His low condition was a fit occasion to cause Shimei to vent his inveterate hatred in curses and railings. So by his providence disposing the children of Israel under such straits, where sometimes their enemies pursued them, and sometimes they wanted food; these calamities gave occasion to their infidelity to exert itself in murmurings and disregarding the testimony of God's miracles; so as not to hear, nor see, nor perceive what God spoke in them.

Obj. But it may be objected here, if God propose such objects to men, as are fit to provoke and actuate their corruption, then God persuades to sin, and so is the moral cause of sin; since he that persuades only acts *per modum objecti*, by proposing such objects to the mind as are apt to entice and gain upon it.

Ans. To this I answer, that God cannot be said to persuade to sin: because, though he proposes such objects, yet he does not withal interpose his authority, so as to desire or command the soul, which carries a greater weight and moment with it to induce to sin, than the provocation of any sinful object whatsoever. In short, for one to work in the nature of a moral cause, there is not only required a presenting of a suitable object that may affect a man's mind; but there is required also that he who persuades, should so far own that object, as to desire or command him to comply with it, wherein the chief nature of persuasion consists: and it is far from the righteous God to do thus.

(3.) God hardens to sin by affording his influence and concurrence to those actions and motions, that such objects and occasions stir up in the soul, so far forth as they are positive and natural. And these ways concurring, God is said to harden the heart, not by creating any sinful dispositions in the heart, nor yet by affording a special influence to any sinful action as such; but by disposing of objects, and affording a general influence to the material part of the action, which is the subject matter of that obliquity. It is not to be hoped, that these things can be so explained as to take off all cavils; but this may suffice to those who desire to be wise to sobriety, and had rather embrace than dispute the truth.

IV. The fourth thing is, to show *how God can justly reprehend men for not hearing nor perceiving, when, upon his denial of a heart, there is a necessity lying upon them to do neither.* Now there can be no just reprehension, but for sin; and nothing can be sin, but that which is voluntary and free: and how can that be free for a man to do or not to do, which from necessity he cannot do?

For the clearing of this, I have already shown, that God's denial of a heart is not the cause of the necessity of the soul's not perceiving, but its own native hardness. But here then the question will be, how it can be blamed for this hardness which is not voluntary, but lies upon it by a necessity of sinful nature. Some here restrain that maxim ('whatsoever is sinful is also voluntary') only to sinful actions; but it may be also true of sinful habits, which, though congenite with our natures, may be yet said to be free and voluntary. For a thing is said to be free, either formally, as an action produced by the free will; or by interpretation, as that which is consequent upon such an action. Now this general and native hardness upon all men's hearts is the immediate product of the sin of Adam, which was most free and voluntary: and every man is as really guilty of this sin, as he was really represented in Adam. So that although at present he be naturally under a necessity of rejecting the means, yet this necessity is in effect voluntary; and therefore sin, inasmuch as it follows upon that which was properly so. If Jephthah by a rash vow bring himself under a necessity of one of these two sins, either to break his vow, or kill his daughter; yet inasmuch as he himself procured this necessity by his own voluntary vow, it is virtually and by consequence no less voluntary. He that freely brings upon himself a disability of embracing the means of grace, is liable to that reprehension and punishment which is due to a voluntary rejection of them. And thus much concerning the fourth thing.

Application.

Use 1. This doctrine speaks refutation to that opinion, that states a sufficiency of grace in the bare proposal of things to be believed and practised, without a new powerful work of the Spirit upon the heart, that may determine and enable it to believe and accept of these things. The assertors of this opinion hold, that the mind of God clearly revealed, and urged with due persuasions, is a suitable object to a rational understanding, which has power enough to close with every object agreeable to it. If this were true, why does the Spirit here give this as a reason of their not hearing, nor perceiving, because God has denied them "a heart to perceive, and an ear to hear?" Certain it is, that the Israelites had the same abilities of a natural understanding and a will that others had; and if this had been able to do the business, they could not have been said to have wanted "a heart to perceive." How hardly is proud nature convinced of its own weakness! Assuredly, if those scriptures that so frequently inculcate the total blindness and darkness of a natural understanding, and the impotence of the will in things spiritual, be true, then this opinion must be false. Whatsoever in these things is attributed to mere nature, so much is derogated from

God. Those who espouse the defence of nature in this particular, present their opinions as to the manner of expression variously; but the thing they drive at is still the same.

(1.) Some say, that nature of itself indeed is not able to apprehend or close in with these things; but there is a universal grace, that does generally repair and make up the breaches of nature, and enlightens every man that comes into the world, as they misapply that scripture. So that as Adam's sin brought upon his posterity a total disability to apprehend the things of God, so Christ's death, which was of an equal latitude, purchased that general assistance of the Spirit, that should take off that utter disability, and recruit nature so as again to put it in a capacity of apprehending the things of God when discovered to it; of which things also there is a general discovery made in the sun, moon, and stars, preaching the gospel. But this opinion also directly contradicts the text: for if there was such a universal ability in men to conceive aright of things spiritual, why does the Spirit here say, that God had not yet given these men "a heart to perceive?" Therefore there was either no such universal grace bestowed upon all men, or the children of Israel were exempt from this general corporation of mankind. But that such men, when they use the word *grace*, intend not the thing, is clear, as from all their writings, so more particularly from a late author, who in this case expresses his mind to this effect: That when he says reason is able to comprehend and comply with the things of God, reason is not to be understood as abstracted and separate from the concurrence of God, but as seconded and assisted by it; as the sun is said to know the time of its rising and going down; not that the sun abstracted from God's concurrence can do this, but as directed by it. And he adds, that as this assistance never fails to direct the sun in his course, unless by a miracle, so neither does God ever fail to vouchsafe that assistance to reason, whereby it may be enabled to apprehend things spiritual. From hence it is clear, that the word *grace* is here used to express nature, as Pelagius used it, *ad frangendam invidiam;* that an opinion equally venomous might appear the less odious. For according to this assertion, it is no more supernatural for a soul to believe, than for the sun to rise and set in his appointed time.

(2.) There are others who say indeed, that it is not in the power of man's will to believe; but they explain their meaning thus, that it is not in man's power to believe when he will; that is, a man engaged and hardened in a way of sin, cannot immediately in that condition advance into such a spiritual act as believing, till he has gradually disposed himself to it. So that they hold, that a man in the most sinful condition may dispose himself to be better, and from thence arise to be yet better; and so lay such a series or train of good dispositions, that shall at length end in belief. And I think it is apparent to any ordi-

nary reason, that to assert this, is to strike in with the known enemies of God's grace, who by pretending to enlarge it, do indeed really subvert it.

But now, beside the conviction that these men might meet with in the clear current of the scriptures, certainly their own experience may convince them, that a perceiving heart is a new and special gift of God: for although at present they may find it in their power to believe, yet if they reflect upon the former part of their life, they will find a time when they lay bound hand and foot; when they were no more able to get their heart thoroughly affected with the sense and hatred of sin, nor to believe and fasten their reliance upon Christ in the promises, than a dead man to rise from the grave. And if they never found that it was thus with them, I believe there are few who understand these things, that for all the world would venture the eternal concernment of their souls upon such a faith. But if their own experience will afford them no light, let them view the condition of some of God's saints, who, when they have been in a state of grace, and the seed of faith has remained within them; yet, when God has hid his face, and suspended the fresh influence of his Spirit, they have been no more able to act, nor exercise that grace, nor excite their faith when the promise has lain before them, than to remove mountains. Now hence we may argue thus: If holy men, endued with the principle and seed of faith, without a new gift from the Spirit, have lain as it were dead, not able to act suitably to that principle; how then will those that are in a state of nature, and void of this principle, be able to hear or perceive the mind of God in the gospel?

Use 2, is of exhortation; that in the enjoyment of the means of grace, we should not terminate in the means, but look up to God, who alone is able to give a heart to improve them. This should make us not only pray, but also hear, with our eyes lift up to heaven. The greatest persuasions, the most melting and affectionate expressions that can drop from man, cannot give a heart; every such gift is a little creation. But certainly, when we have got our hearts wrought upon and heated by the external preaching of the word, then we should be chiefly importunate with God to preach the same word over internally, that then he would strike the stroke, then he would make such an impression as should abide. For without this, after the most powerful preaching of the word, nature will return to itself. Happy those, who do not only hear the report of the gospel, but to whom also the arm of the Lord is revealed. When we have heard the word, read the scriptures, and enjoyed the richest means of salvation; yet in order to our believing, we should as much depend upon God, as if we enjoyed none of these at all. Still addressing ourselves unto him as Jehoshaphat did upon another occasion; "Lord, as for us we know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee."

SERMON XXIX.

ON THE PERSON AND OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

[Preached at Worcester-house, May 29.]

JOHN xv. 26.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

THESE words contain in them two general parts.

I. The promise of sending the Spirit.

II. The end of this being sent; which was to testify of Christ.

In the words containing the former of these, we have a full description of the Spirit; and that, 1. In respect of his person; 2. Of his office or employment.

The account of his person we have in this, that he is said to "proceed from the Father." And his employment, in these two things: 1. That he is the Comforter. 2. That he is the Spirit of truth.

Of all these in their order.

And first concerning his procession from the Father. There has been a long and a great controversy between the Latin and the Greek Church concerning this: Whether the Holy Ghost proceeds equally from the Father and from the Son; which the Latins, and all the other western churches hold; or whether he proceeds from the Father only by the Son, which alone the Greeks admit; and for this cause stand utterly unchurched by the church of Rome, as erring in a prime and fundamental point of faith.

But here I cannot but think, that in articles relating to such things, of which the reason of man can frame no explicit apprehension, it is a daring, uncharitable, and perhaps a very irrational thing, to condemn any one for expressing the same thing in different terms. And that the Greek church does no more, seems probable from hence.

(1.) That they deny not the Spirit to be consubstantial with the Father and the Son.

(2.) That they acknowledge that he is as properly the Spirit of the Son, as of the Father. And if, when we say that the Spirit proceeds from the Son, we intend no more but that he is

the Spirit of the Son, which they grant and profess; what is it more than a difference in the expression, where they seem to be very near a perfect coincidence as to the thing?

I am sure, some of the most reputed authors in the Latin church avouch so much. Peter Lombard, in the first of the Sentences, 11th distinction, declares his mind thus: *Sanè sciendum est, quod licet in præsenti articulo à nobis Græci verbo discordent, tamen sensu non differunt.* And Scotus, upon the same place of Lombard, speaks to the same purpose: *Antiquorum Græcorum à Latinis discrepantia in voce potius est, et modo explicandi emanationem Spiritus Sancti, quàm in ipsa re.* The like is to be found in Aquinas, Bonaventure, and others, concerning this difference between the Greek and Latin church, in expressing this article.

Besides, it is observable, that after *Patre* the word *Filioque* was added by the Latin church: and since the Greek church may allege this in their defence, that it is no where in scripture expressly said, that the Spirit proceeds from the Son; this may be further pleaded for them, that in things, the belief of which can have no foundation but the testimony of scripture, it is there safest precisely and strictly to adhere to bare scripture expressions.

And thus much briefly concerning the person of the Spirit. The next thing is his employment, represented to us under a double notion.

1. And first of a Comforter. Christ suits his gifts to our exigences and occasions. Nothing so opportune to the sorrowful, as a comforter. And as for Christ's disciples, we know that upon the very prediction of his departure, "sorrow had filled their hearts." But then, this being actually come to pass, those clouds began to gather over their heads thicker and blacker, and at length to break forth into violence and persecutions: and therefore under so many discouragements from without, they must needs have sunk, had they not had some supporter within. And their support was to be internal, that so it might be above their adversaries' power to bereave them of; John xvi. 22, "Your joy no man taketh from you." It is out of their sight, and therefore out of their reach; like a fountain lurking in the bowels of the earth, secret, plentiful, and continual.

It is a sad and a poor condition, when there is provision made only for being, not for comfort; for life, not for refreshment. And therefore in the spiritual, as well as in the natural life, there are sublimer fruitions, as well as bare sustenance. For such is the nature of man, that it requires lucid intervals; and the vigour of the mind would flag and decay, should it always jog on at the rate of a common enjoyment, without being sometimes quickened and exalted with the vicissitude of some more refined pleasures.

But what kind of comfort is this, that the Spirit of God conveys to believers? Why, it is very strange and peculiar, but most

significantly set forth in that place, in Mark x. 29, 30, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time; houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." What! receive all these things with persecution, when it cannot be persecution, unless it deprive us of all these? Why, yes; God will give us the comfort of these things, even without the enjoyment of them. He can extract the spirit of these things from their bulk, and convey it single without the possession.

For as in the food that we take into our bodies, it is but very little that passes into nutriment, and so is converted into our substance; so in the greatest affluence of plenty, it is not the mass of the enjoyment, but the elixir or spirit that is derived through it, that gives the comfort.

Now it is a standing rule even in philosophy, that whatsoever God does by the mediation of second causes, he can do immediately by himself, and without them. And therefore it is no wonder if God can torment, where we see no tormentor, and comfort where we behold no comforter; he can do it by immediate emanations from himself, by continual effluxes of those powers and virtues, which he was pleased to implant in a weaker and fainter measure in created agents.

They indeed do all things by gross conveyances and material assistances; as an earthly parent cannot refresh his son without the means and instruments of refreshment, as meat, clothes, money, and other such accommodations: but whatsoever we do by the help of these, that God does by a plenitude and all-sufficiency flowing from himself. Thus the impure sublunary fire conveys neither heat nor light, but as it kindles upon some earthly materials of wood, stubble, or the like; but the nobler and celestial fire in the body of the sun, that works all these effects by a communication of its own virtue, without the interposal of those culinary helps: it affords flame and light, and warmth and all, without fuel.

Now this certainly should compose the murmurs and distrusts of infidelity. Men are apt to confine God to their own thoughts, and not to allow him a scope of acting beyond the measure of the visible means; nor to think that he can be a comforter, any longer than they have those things about them, by which they may be their own comforters. If God should promise plenty in a dearth, and fulness of bread when the earth denies her increase, would not unbelief presently presume the impossibility, and laugh at the promise in that question of the doubter: 2 Kings vii. 2, "If God should make windows in heaven, how could this thing be?" Yet the objector, we see, was answered with a full, though a sad confutation.

Sometimes we see no means by which God may comfort; but can he not therefore do it without means? There are no wagons nor conduit-pipes to bring down the influences of heaven to us; yet at their stated seasons we find that they visit us certainly and universally. And thus much for the first part of the Spirit's employment, namely, that he was to be a Comforter.

2. The second, was his being the Spirit of truth; upon which account it is said of him, John xvi. 13, that he should "lead the disciples into all truth." He is the great guide of souls, and discoverer of the mysterious depths of the gospel. Christ indeed had sufficiently preached these divine truths to the world by an external promulgation; but the Spirit was to preach them over again, by the inward illuminations of the mind.

Hereupon also the grand property of truth is ascribed to the Spirit, which is conviction. It is said of him, John xvi. 8, that "he shall convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment." Now conviction is not only truth, but the predominance of truth; the triumph of a well-managed argumentation. The meaning of those words being this, that the Spirit of God shall bring home those concerning truths to men's understanding, with such a prevailing sway and evidence, that they shall not be able to deny their assent to them, which way soever their corruptions may force their practice.

Nay, truth is such a peculiar characteristic note of God's Spirit, that this gives it one great discrimination from the evil spirit, who is properly the spirit of falsehood, the deceiver and the seducer, and a liar from the beginning; both the parent and the patron of lies. Yea, and as if he had the monopoly of all fallacy and falsehood, it is said of him, that when he speaks a lie, he speaks it of his own. It is his peculiar, his inheritance; and the whole race of liars is said to descend from him, as their grand original, and head of their family. Justly, therefore, does God exhibit his Spirit to us under the noble denomination of truth.

But here, since these two titles given to the Holy Ghost, viz. of the Comforter, and of the Spirit of truth, seem to have some emphatical relation one to another, so as to found a mutual dependence between them; I shall here endeavour to show, that his being a Comforter depends upon his being the Spirit of truth; and particularly, how truth comes to have this comforting influence upon man's mind. I conceive it derives this virtue from these two things.

(1.) From the native, congenial suitableness that it has to man's understanding. And from the application of a suitable object to a well-disposed faculty, there naturally arises comfort. If you now demand, how truth comes to be so suitable to the mind; I answer, that there can be no further reason given, but that it is the nature of it so to be: and of the nature of things there is no reason to be assigned, but the will of the Creator,

who was pleased, in ordering the great economy of the world, to plant an agreeableness between some natures, and a disagreeableness between others.

There is that agreement between truth and the mind, that there is between light and the eye; which is the sense of pleasure, of the purest and the most sublime pleasure. And surely, of all the creatures that have issued from the workmanship of omnipotence, there is none so pleasing, so refreshing, or rather so enlivening as the light; which is that, that gives a seasonage to all other fruitions, that lays open the bosom of the universe, and shows the treasures of nature; and, in a word, gives opportunity to the enjoyment of all the other senses.

It is reported of a certain blind man, that he yet knew when a candle was brought into the room, by the sudden refreshment that he found caused by it upon his spirits. Now give me leave to show, that truth is as great a comfort to the soul. For what makes the studious man prefer a book before a revel, the rigours of contemplation and retirements, before merry-meetings and jolly company? Is it because he has not the same appetites with other men, or because he has no taste of pleasure? No, certainly; but because a nobler pleasure has rendered those inferior ones tasteless and contemptible.

For is there any delight comparable to what reason finds, when it pursues a conclusion into all its consequences, and sees one truth grow out of another, and by degrees rise out of obscurity into evidence and demonstration? Do you think that the intent speculations of Archimedes were not infinitely more pleasing than the carouses of Epicurus? And if the embraces of natural truth be so transporting to a philosopher, what must the discovery of the supernatural revealed truths of the gospel be to a Christian? where the pleasure is heightened according to the different worth of the object; where every truth comes recommended to the soul with a double excellency, its greatness and its concernment.

(2.) Truth comes to have this comforting influence upon man's mind, from the peculiar and sovereign virtue it has to clear the conscience; and that, from the two great annoyances and disturbances of it, guilt and doubting: which two are the causes of all the trouble and perplexity of man's mind.

1st. It clears it from guilt. Sin is the standing and eternal cause of sorrow, and that not only from those outward penal effects that it draws after it, but from the very reflection of the mind upon it. It is troublesome, offensive, and opposite to the principles of nature. The conscience shrinks, and feels a kind of horror within itself when it thinks of a vile action. Every sin, upon the apprehensive conscience, is like a dust falling upon the ball of the eye: how pungent, sharp, and afflicting is it to that tender part!

Now truth discharges the conscience of the trouble of guilt, by being the great means to prevent the sin. Hence the way of holiness is frequently in scripture called "the way of truth:" and it is worth our observation, that there is no sin ever committed, but it is ushered in by some error of the mind, and a false judgment passed upon things. For notwithstanding, that in most sins the mind has a general judgment of the evil of the thing that it is about to do, before the sin comes to be actually committed: from all circumstances and particulars put together, as the present gratification, and yet withal future safety upon repentance, the mind passes a particular practical judgment, that it is better for it to do that sin, than not to do it. And here is the deception, after which follows the sinful action. But now, did the mind proceed by the unerring rules and informations of truth, it would judge otherwise, and consequently do otherwise; and thereupon be secured from that trouble, horror, and anguish of conscience, that God, by an irreversible decree, has entailed upon the commission of sin.

2dly. Truth clears the conscience of doubt; and this frequently exerts its perplexing quality, where there is no other foundation but a mere surmise of guilt. But how come the consciences of the most pious and the strictest persons, to be oftentimes in such plunges of horror and amazement, but from misgivings about the safety of their spiritual estate? And what is the cause of doubting but the disappearance of truth? How comes the mind to be frighted and amazed, but because it is in the dark? When truth wraps itself in a cloud, and shuns the eye, then the reason of man is in suspense, and under various fluctuations which way to determine; but it is certainty alone, that is the bottom of all rational determinations.

There is no weariness like that which rises from doubting, from the perpetual jogging of an unfixed reason. The torment of suspense is very great; and as soon as the wavering perplexed mind begins to determine, be the determination which way soever, it will find itself at ease. But now it is the Spirit of truth that gives assurance, assurance that cashiers doubt, and consequently restores comfort.

And thus much for the first part of the text, in which is contained the promise of sending the Holy Ghost, the comforter. I proceed now to the

II. viz. *The end of his being sent,* which was to testify of Christ. In which we are to consider two things: 1. What it was that the Spirit was to testify of Christ. 2. By what ways and means he was to testify this of him.

1. For the first of these, the Holy Ghost was never sent to testify any thing of Christ but what he had testified of himself before; as that he was the Son of God, the Messias, and

Saviour of the world. In all that the Spirit was to do or speak, he was but to act the part of an ambassador: in John xvi. 13, Christ says, that "he should not speak of himself." And again, in the next verse, "He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." All the suggestions of the Spirit, in this case, were not invention, but repetition.

2. As for the ways and means by which the Spirit testified of Christ, they were the gifts conferred by him upon the disciples to enable and fit them for their apostolic employment; of the memory of which action, this day is the solemn celebration. Now, though it is not to be doubted, but the gifts of the Spirit were so universal, as to reach and cure all their unfitness; yet there were three that seemed more eminently designed and more peculiarly effectual for the great purpose of preaching the gospel.

(1.) The first was the gift of miracles. Every miracle is the suffrage of heaven to the truth of a doctrine. And as Christ had done greater miracles than any before him, so he promised his disciples a power of doing greater miracles than himself. The acts of the apostles were so many demonstrations of the truth of Christianity; for all those signs and wonders were done in Christ's name, which retained a surviving efficacy, even after his departure. His name was enough to supply his presence; a name to which every knee bowed, either by way of adoration or submission. The devils confessed him, his enemies oftentimes acknowledged him, even when their interest denied him, Acts iv. 16. Yea, every malady and disease proclaimed the truth of Christ's doctrine, while they felt the curing influence of his power. Every preacher was then a physician, without changing his profession.

(2.) The second was the gift of tongues. That a man should learn all tongues in a day's space, one would think it impossible; yet we have seen it done when the Spirit was the teacher: so easily can God in an hour's time outdo the acquisitions of human industry for many years. And this surely was a convincing, amazing argument of the truth of the Christian religion to all its adversaries: and the tongues by which the apostles spoke were a sufficient demonstration of the truth of what they spoke; neither was it any more than suitable to the nature of this doctrine, that what was to be known to all nations, should be proclaimed in all tongues, should speak a universal language. The wisdom of heaven did not think fit to bespeak men in an unknown tongue: nor, what had been more miraculous than all miracles, that men should be saved by what they could not understand.

(3.) The third and great means by which the Holy Ghost testified of Christ, was by that strange, undaunted, and supernatural courage that he infused into the disciples. Truly so great, that upon a due consideration of man's nature, I look

upon it as a proof of Christianity, so far as that religion depends upon matter of fact, comparable to the highest miracle.

Every lie is weak, and he that promulges a lie, knowing it to be so, is naturally diffident and fearful. But so invincible a persuasion possessed the disciples of the truth of what they asserted, that it bore them above the highest contumelies, the greatest hardships, and the sharpest persecutions: Acts iv. 20, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." They spoke, as it were, by a necessary impulse, whether they would or no.

Neither were they naturally such resolute persons, that this hardiness of theirs might be reputed an effect of their temper and complexion: for it appeared upon several occasions before, that they were men of a timorous and a poor spirit. How did they cry out when they saw Christ walking upon the sea! thinking that they had seen a spirit, Matt. xiv. 26. And last of all, when Christ was apprehended, "they all forsook him and fled," Matt. xxvi. 56. And Peter, who was the boldest of them, yet how cowardly did he deny his master! for the baseness of that action could be resolved into nothing but his fear.

But after the diffusion of the Holy Ghost, we find that no opposition could quell them; no terror affright, nor any prison or torment silence them. And therefore, when Christ commanded them to stay at Jerusalem, and expect the gift of the Holy Ghost, Luke xxiv. 49, he very properly tells them, that they should be "endued with power from on high;" that is, with such a gift of resolved constancy and courage, as should make them superior to all fears within, or oppositions without.

In a word, the Holy Ghost so furnished and enabled Christ's disciples to testify of him, that they were the most qualified witnesses of the truth of what they avouched, that ever appeared upon the stage of the world; nor was any doctrine or religion besides the Christian ever attested with such illustrious proofs, and such unexceptionable reasons of credibility.

I suppose a full reflection upon what has been delivered cannot but furnish us with an infallible rule, by which to try men's pretences of the Spirit. It is comprised in this short interrogatory: Do they testify of Christ? Does their doctrine only transcribe what stands already written in the word? Otherwise, if they invent and substitute something in the room of gospel; if they find not only comment, but text also, and plead the spirit in defiance of the letter; it is not the Spirit of God that acts them, but the spirit of darkness and desolation, that ruins government, and subverts kingdoms: and if it had not been for such a kind of spirit, this day had not been by a third part so much a festival as it is.

For had not the king been driven out of his dominions, he could not have been so gloriously restored; and had it not been

for the furious spirit of enthusiasm, those confusions, the fatal cause of his expulsion, had never happened. For was not the prime leader and artificer of this successful villany the professed father of enthusiasts? Did he not still plead inward instigations, in opposition to express commands? And were not all his legions possessed by the same spirit; by whose teachings they thought themselves sufficiently discharged from the abrogated precepts of allegiance? But since it is our duty not to violate the memory of our oppressors, but silently, thankfully, and forgetfully to accept the oppression, we will commemorate only the king's restitution.

And this I think may not improperly coincide with the very business of the day, which is to celebrate the sending of the Holy Ghost; who also must be acknowledged the cause of this great transaction: so that we may, with a peculiar emphasis and propriety, express the king's restoration in those words of the prophet, Zech. iv. 6, "Not by might, nor by strength; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

For the king returned not a conqueror, but a conquered person, borne upon the backs of his conquerors; and brought in by a body of men, who at that very time wanted neither force nor will to have devoured him; but by a strange surprise and infatuation upon their spirits, were prevailed upon to do they knew not what, nor why.

It was an action that carried in it such bright testimonies of a supernatural power, so much above, nay against the means and actors visibly appearing in it; that I know no argument from metaphysics or natural philosophy, that to my reason proves the existence of a Deity more fully, than the consideration of this prodigious revolution: which, if it does not leave lasting impressions of gratitude in men's minds, manifesting itself in the returns of a pious life, truly the delivered persons will be yet a greater wonder than the deliverance. But whether or no it has had this effect, and whether many have not returned rather hardened than reduced by their afflictions, and brought out of the furnace with them that dross which first cast them into it; God knows, and their own consciences know, and their lives in a great measure testify.

It is a sad and a fearful consideration, but too obvious to escape any observing mind, that atheism, obscenity, and a professed scorn of religion, has so wrought itself into the behaviour, the discourse, and the very genius of the times, that if God can be provoked again, they carry in them the threatening presages and dismal prognostics of an impending national judgment, which God of his infinite mercy avert. And since nothing less will do it, may he continue to preserve us by a greater miracle of goodness, than that by which he first restored us.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

Now though, as I have already shown, the chief subject of the text was the Holy Spirit; yet as if it carried in it a conjunction of two great festivals, it seems to point both at the Pentecost and the Trinity.

For in the words we have, 1. The person sent, which was the Holy Ghost. 2. The person sending him, which was the Son. 3. The person from whom he is said to proceed, which was the Father.

So great a mystery have we lying in so small a compass; that which neither the heaven of heavens can contain, nor the grasp of human reason comprehend, we see here wrapped up and represented in one period of this sublime Evangelist.

But you will say, Does not our creed tell us, that "the three persons of the godhead are coequal?" How then comes the Son to send and employ the Holy Ghost, which argues a distance and superiority?

I answer, that their equality is to be understood only in respect of their nature; and an equality of nature hinders not an inequality in point of order and office, especially being voluntarily undertaken: in respect of which, the Spirit may be properly said to be sent by the Son, though otherwise, as to the divine nature, they are absolutely coequal.

We have here the three persons, as it were, met in council about the grand affair of man's salvation. The Father contriving, the Son ordering, and the Spirit performing. One would almost think that it were lawful for man to be proud, when it is thus made the interest of heaven to look after and to promote the concerns of his happiness. It is like the sun, that vast and glorious body, wheeling about the earth to give warmth and influence to a poor plant or a little flower.

God is pleased to make it his business that we should be saved. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are all employed, and every person has shared out to himself a distinct office in the management of that great action; and that with such a stated order, that the manner of doing is as admirable as the thing done. The Father could have transacted the whole business of man's salvation by himself; but he was pleased to honour the work with a mystery, and by allotting to each person his part, to recommend order to our imitation.

In short, from this whole passage, by way of deduction, we may collect and learn these two things:

1. God's gracious love and condescension to man.
2. The worth of souls.

1. For the first of these, was it not wonderful that the whole Trinity should thus stoop down to regard and advance us! It is as if a king should call his parliament to invent ways and means how to prefer a few beggars.

Twelve poor fishermen were those to whom the Father and the Son first sent the Holy Ghost to be their comforter. And where not these worthy persons, to whom God should send an embassy from heaven? Yet the love of God thought all this little enough to carry on the good of mankind. The Trinity is indeed a great mystery, yet it is a question, whether God is not yet more wonderful in his love, than in the way of his subsistence.

2. We learn hence the worth of souls. Though the divine nature is so glorious, that there is room enough for condescension, even in his treating with the most excellent of his creatures; yet surely the Lord of the universe does not busy himself about trifles; nor lay designs and use great counsels to pursue the air and the wind.

We can quaff away a soul, swear away a soul, and squander away eternity upon brutish and senseless gratifications of the flesh; but the omniscient all-wise God has another judgment of souls; he looks upon them as worth his own taking pains upon. Show me so much as one footstep in scripture where God with such solemnity expresses a design to make any man rich or honourable; those things he scatters abroad with a looser, a promiscuous, and more careless hand.

But the salvation of souls is never left to chance, nor to any thing like contingency. All the persons of the Trinity are ready, as I may speak with reverence, to wait upon us in our way to heaven; solicitous to secure us in our passage, and by all ways, methods, and encouragements, to comfort us in this world, and at length to waft us to a better.

To which God of his infinite mercy vouchsafe to bring us. Amen.

SERMON XXX.

THE BURDEN OF A WOUNDED SPIRIT.

PROVERBS XVIII. 14.

But a wounded spirit who can bear?

THE corruption of man's nature is, by sad experience, found to be so great, that few are kept from sin, but merely by the check of their fears, representing to them the endless, insupportable torments of another world, as the certain consequent and terrible reward of it. Which fears, if men arrive to such a pitch of atheism, as to be able to shake off (a perfection now-a-days attained to by many, and aspired to by more), there seems to be nothing left further to work upon such persons, in the way of fear, nor consequently to control, and put a stop to the full career and fury of their lusts.

Upon which account it will, I conceive, be no ill service to religion, to let such profligate wretches know, that their infidelity cannot set them so far out of the reach of vengeance, but that, while they endeavour to cast off all dread of future damnation, God can antedate the torments they disbelieve, and convince them of the possibility of such miseries hereafter, by an actual foretaste of the same here; that he can kindle one hell within them, before they enter into another: and, by what he can make them feel, teach them the certainty of what they refuse to fear.

It is indeed none of the least of God's titles and prerogatives, that he is "the God of the spirits of all flesh;" and that, as he first made the soul, so he retains an immediate irresistible power over it, so as to be able to turn the inclinations, and to dispose of the comfort and the sorrows of it, as he pleases: and all this independently upon any of those objects, which by the ordinary course of nature it converses with. The usual materials, of which the soul makes up its comforts and satisfactions here on earth, are the felicities of this world; and the ordinary cause of its sorrows are the adverse and cross accidents of the same: nevertheless, God can infuse comfort into the soul, in spite of the sharpest earthly calamities, and on the other hand, smite it with the severest anguish and bitterness, in the midst of the highest affluence and prosperity.

The text presents us here with a short, but full comparison

between the grief that afflicts the outward man, and that which preys upon the inward; together with the transcendent greatness of the latter above the former, as shall be made out presently in the grand instance of both these sorts of sufferings, even our blessed Saviour himself. For let this outside or shell of nature, the body, be under never so much pain and agony, yet a well-settled and resolved mind will be able to buoy it up, and keep it from sinking: the spirits will bear, and, by bearing, will at length master all these infirmities. But when the spirit itself is wounded, and struck through, the grief presently becomes victorious and intolerable. The soul, in this case, being like a bird wounded in the wing, the proper instrument and natural engine of its support, this immediately puts an end to its flight, and makes all striving vain; for fall it must to the ground.

In the words there are two things to be explained.

1. What is meant by spirit.
2. What is imported by its being wounded.

For the first of these, we are to observe, that both scripture and philosophy hold forth to us, in the soul of man, an upper and a lower part; not, indeed, in respect of its substance, for that is indivisible, but in respect of its faculties. And as this lower or inferior part consists of those sensitive faculties and appetites, whose operations being wholly tied to the organs of the body, do accordingly converse only with bodily and gross objects; so there is a higher and more noble portion of the soul, purely intellectual; and in operation, as well as in substance, perfectly spiritual: which is called by philosophers τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν, that is, the leading, ruling, and directing part of the soul: and by the scripture, "the spirit of the mind:" that is, the most exalted, refined, and quintessential part of it, in Eph. iv. 23, "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind." For that the soul is a spirit, that is to say, a substance void of matter and dimensions, I suppose none will deny, but those who (with your oracle, Hobbes, in the head of them) admit of no substance, but body; and having fully subdued faith to senses, and so, like Thomas, resolving to believe no further than your eyes and hands can reach, will perhaps in religion, as well as natural objects, make the tube, the still, and the telescope, the sole measure of their creed. In defiance of which atheistical notions, I affirm, that there is a certain noble and refined part of the soul expressed to us in the text, by "spirit," and here said to be "wounded." Which is the

Second thing to be explained by us; and, I suppose, is so far and fully explained by us already, from the very nature of the subject to which it is here ascribed, that every one presently apprehends it to be an expression purely figurative; and that the soul being wounded, signifies nothing else but its being deeply and intimately possessed with a lively sense of God's wrath for

sin, dividing, entering, and forcing its way into the most vital parts of it, as a sword or rapier does into the body. I say, possessed with a sense of God's wrath for sin; forasmuch as there is no grief but meritoriously presupposes sin as the cause of it; not that I deny that God by his absolute prerogative, without any violation of his other attribute, could and might grieve and afflict an innocent person, if he so pleased; but that by the stated rule of his transactings with men, he has resolved the contrary, and never afflicts or torments any rational creature that is not a sinner, either by actual commission, or at least by imputation.

Now this brief explication of the words being premised, the sense of them lies full and clear in this one proposition; viz.

That the trouble and anguish of a soul labouring under a sense of God's displeasure for sin, is inexpressibly greater than any other grief or trouble whatsoever.

The prosecution of which I shall manage under these following particulars.

I. I shall show what kind of persons are the proper subjects of this trouble.

II. I shall show wherein the excessive greatness of this trouble doth appear.

III. I shall show by what ways and means it is brought upon the soul.

IV. What is God's end and design in casting men into such a perplexed condition. And,

V. And lastly, I shall draw some useful inferences from the whole.

Of each of which in their order.

I. And first for *the persons who are the proper objects of this trouble.* These I affirm to be, indifferently, both the righteous and the wicked, both such as God loves, and such as he hates; but with a very different issue in one and in the other. The reason of which assertion is, because these troubles and spiritual terrors are not, as such, either acts or figures of grace, by which alone persons truly pious and regenerate are distinguished from the wicked and degenerate; but they are properly effects of God's anger, striking and afflicting the soul for sin, and consequently are alike incident to both sorts, forasmuch as both are sinners; and even the most pious person in the world has fuel enough in his guilty soul for the wrath of God to flame out upon in all these terrible rebukes. Nay, where there is no inherent guilt, these effects of wrath may take place: as in the case of our Saviour, who, without the least personal inherent guilt, suffered the utmost that an angry God could inflict upon him in this world. And therefore nothing certain can be concluded of any man's spiritual estate, in reference to his future happiness or

misery, from the present terrors and amazements that his conscience labours under: for, as Cain, and Judas, and many more reprobates, have suffered, so David and many other excellent saints of God have felt their shares of the same; though the issue, I confess, has not been the same in both; but that alters not the nature of the thing itself.

Nay, I shall add further, that according to the present economy of God's dealing with the souls of men, persons truly good and holy do more frequently taste of this bitter cup than the wicked and the reprobate; who are seldom alarumed out of their sins by such severe interruptions; but, for the most part, remain seated up in ease and security, to the fearful day of retribution. And therefore I should be so far from passing any harsh or doubtful sentence upon the condition of a person struggling under the apprehensions of God's wrath, that I should, on the contrary, account such a one a much fitter subject for evangelical comfort, than those sons of assurance, that having been bred up in a constant confidence of the divine favour to them, never yet felt the least doubt or question arising in their secure hearts about it: and, consequently, should think the balsam of pardoning mercy the only proper infusion for such wounded spirits; while the gall and vinegar of the curse, the caustics and corrosives of the law, were the fittest applications to be made to such brawny, unrelenting hearts, as never yet smarted under any remorse, nor experimentally knew what it was to be troubled for sin. And thus, having shown upon what kind of persons this trouble of mind may fall; I come now to

II. The second particular; which is to show, *wherein the strange, excessive, and sometimes supernatural greatness of it does appear.* In which, though I may seem to contradict that in the prosecution, which I had asserted in the doctrine; namely, that this trouble was beyond expression: it being of the nature and number of those things that are rather to be felt than described; yet, so far as the dimensions of it can be taken, we may collect the surpassing greatness of it from these following discoveries.

1. First, from the behaviour of our Saviour himself in this condition. It was, indeed, a sense of God's wrath for sin that he was under; but for sin never committed by him, for guilt that was none of his, but only by imputation and account of law, founded upon his own free act, in the voluntary assuming of the person of a surety, undertaking to discharge that vast debt of mankind to the divine justice, in his own body upon the cross. Upon which account alone, the wrath of God for sin could have any thing to do with him, who in his own person and actions was absolutely, perfectly, and entirely innocent, or rather even innocence itself.

Now, I think, I may with great truth affirm this; in all the

sufferings that sin can possibly bring upon the sinner, there is, without all peradventure, something more grievous and corroding to the mind of man, from his being conscious that he has actually committed the sin he suffers for, than in all the sharpest and most afflicting impressions of pain, of which that suffering, as to the matter of it, does consist. Otherwise, surely, the voice of reason, in the bare discourses of nature, could never have risen so high, as to affirm that a wise or dexterous man could not be miserable; that he was unconcerned in all bodily pain, and might sing in Phalaris's bull. But scripture, which is the best, and experience which is the next philosophy, have put the matter past all doubt; the first telling us, that it is sin only is the sting of death. And the other perpetually ringing this sad peal in every suffering sinner's conscience, *Perditio tua ex te;* that his misery is but the due and just consequent of his own actions, the genuine fruit of his own free, unconstrained choice. And this is that, that envenoms the cup of God's fury, and adds poison to the bitterness of that fatal draught.

But now this part of suffering *for* sin, or rather, *from* sin, Christ neither did nor could undergo; it being a contradiction, that he, who never committed sin, should feel in his conscience those stings and remorses that can spring only from a sense of having committed it. No; these are the natural, essential results of a sinful act; and so rest wholly within the person of the agent: the primitive rewards of sin, which consist properly in those pains, which, by positive sanction of law are adjudged to every sinful action, and to which alone Christ did or could subject himself.

And yet, we see the sense of the divine wrath exerting itself upon Christ only in these latter, and stripped of the poison of all personal guilt, was so direful and intolerable, that it made him, who was God as well as man; him, to whom all power in heaven and earth was given; him, by and for whom God made the world, and in whom the very fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily; even this infinite, mighty person, this "man of God's right hand," as the prophet David calls him, did it make to crouch and languish, to roar and to despond, and at length, to sink and die under the overpowering, confounding pressures of it.

And, surely, a greater argument of the force and fury of this sense of God's wrath for sin could not be, than that it should have such dismal effect upon one, who, personally, was no sinner, but only lay under a borrowed guilt; one who had all the advantages of strength, and the supports of innocence, to keep his mind firm, serene, and impenetrable. But all this availed him little, when the deadly infusion had once got into his soul, seized the main arsenal and strong hold of his humanity; and, in a word, cut the nerve of its great and last supporter, the spirit. And in this case, human nature, though advanced to a personal union

and conjunction with the divine, yet was but human nature still; that is, a poor feeble thing, forced to confess its native weakness, and, after a short conflict with the divine wrath, to break and fall under its own ruins. So that it may justly put that high and doleful exclamation into the mouths of all who shall consider Christ upon the cross, "Lord, who knoweth the power of thine anger!" God only can know it; and he only, who was much more than man, could endure it.

2. The strength and greatness of this trouble of mind for sin, appears from those most raised and passionate expressions that have been uttered from time to time, by persons eminent in the ways of God, while they were labouring under it. For a notable instance of which, instead of many, let us hear David, a person frequently in these deep plunges, roaring out his spiritual grievances in most of his Psalms. And I single him out before all others, because he was certainly and signally a type of Christ, both in respect of many things belonging to his person, and many passages relating to his life; and particularly that dolorous part of it that contained his sufferings, and immediately before his death. Which sufferings we have him with great life and clearness representing, in several of his divine hymns; which, howsoever uttered by him in the first person, as if he were still speaking of himself; yet, without all question, in the principal design and purport of them, pointed at the Messiah as their most proper subject. Psalm xxii. is very full, as to his bodily sufferings; but in none of all the Psalms is the spiritual part of his passion set forth to that height that it is in Psalm lxxvii. the first verse to the 10th: in which it will be well worth our while distinctly to consider some of the most remarkable expressions.

As in the third verse, "I complained," says he, "and my spirit was overwhelmed." Which is the language of a sorrow much different from that of a common worldly grief; a grief that would have expressed itself far otherwise; as, I complained, I vented a few sighs and a few tears, and the cloud was presently over; when the shower was fallen, all was clear; sorrow, perhaps, lasted for a night, but it broke with the morning. But the spiritual sorrow here mentioned was still making a progress, still upon the advance, from the tongue to the spirit, from outward expressions to more inward apprehensions. Every sigh and groan rebounded back to the heart, from whence it came. The penitent eye, like the widow's cruse, the more it pours forth, the fuller it is; finding a supply, as it were, in every effusion.

But this sorrow stops not here; it does not only alarm his complaints, but also break his natural rest. In the fourth verse, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking." Just as in that black night before our Saviour's crucifixion; in which it is said of him, that "he began to be sorrowful, and very heavy; nay, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" we find, that he continued watching.

from the beginning to the end of it, without any sleep, when yet the disciples were not able to hold their eyes open. Now this is an undoubted argument of an overpowering grief: for when Darius was excessively troubled for Daniel, it is said of him, in Daniel vi. 18, that "he passed the night fasting, and his sleep went from him." And then for Job, in Job vii. 13, 14, "When I say, My bed shall comfort me, and my couch shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me with visions." When a man's sleep is his torment, what can be his rest? The time of sleep is the only season in which an afflicted person does, as it were, steal some little reprieve from his cares, and for a while deceives his sorrows. But, in this case, the workings of the soul become too potent for the inclinations of nature. For, though sleep be designed by nature to repair and make up the expense of a man's spirits; and withal, nothing spends the spirits comparable to sorrow; yet, here we see the anguish of this spiritual sorrow joins two contrary effects, and at the same time both exhausts the spirits, and hinders all repose; forcibly holding up the eye-lids, and, by a continual flow of tears, keeping them still open. A watchful eye and a mournful heart are usually companions.

But neither is this the utmost effect of this sorrow: it comes at length to swell to that excess, as to be even too big for utterance: as appears from the following words in the same verse, "I am so troubled, that I cannot speak." Words to none more applicable than to him, who, "when he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, was, like a sheep also, dumb before his shearer, and opened not his mouth," Acts viii. 32. Which is yet a higher declaration of an overpressing grief, than the loudest outcries. For nature has not only given a man a voice, but also silence, whereby to manifest the inward passions and affections of his mind. And such a silence speaks the heart so full of sorrow, that, like a vessel, its very fulness sometimes hinders all vent. It is a known saying, that ordinary slight griefs complain, but great sorrows strike the heart with an astonished silence. Thorns make a crackling blaze, and are quickly gone; but great wood lies a long time, and consumes with a silent fire. A still grief is a devouring grief; such a one as preys upon the vitals, sinks into the bones, and dries up the marrow. That wound is of all others the most deadly, that causes the heart to bleed inwardly.

Thus we have seen this sorrow, both in its greatness and variety; sometimes sallying forth in restless clamours and complaints, and sometimes again retreating into a silence, and (if you will admit the expression) even proclaiming itself in dumbness and stupefaction; though, whether rising in one or falling in the other, like a man whether standing upright, or lying down, it loses nothing of its proportion and greatness; as the sea when it ebbs, no less than when it flows, has still the fulness of an ocean.

But neither does it continue long under this amazed silence; but we have it presently again rising up, and boiling over in complaints much more vehement and passionate than the former; as appears from the seventh to the tenth verses: "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever; and doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" And what was all this, but a prophetic paraphrase upon those words of our Saviour upon the cross; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Certainly there is something in them more than ordinary. For could a common grief have indited such expressions? Every word is a strain above nature; every sentence is the copy of such a sorrow as rather would express itself, than either does or can. And surely he that shall duly ponder the weight, relish the paths, and consider that spiritual vigour that sparkles in every period of them, will find them greater and higher than any expressions that the sense of an external calamity could suggest. They are the very breathings of despair, and the words of a soul scorched with the direful apprehensions of God's wrath, and a total eclipse of his favour. The truth is, they sound like words spoken at a rate or pitch above a mere man, and I doubt not were dictated by the Holy Ghost, to set forth the sufferings of him who was so.

3. The excessive greatness of this trouble of mind appears from the uninterrupted, incessant continuance of it. It does not come and go by fits, or paroxysms: it has no pauses, or vicissitudes; for then the respite of one hour might lay in strength to endure the troubles of the next. From the very first minute of our Saviour's passion, from the very first arrest and seizure of his righteous soul, the anguish of this sorrow never left it, till it had forced that to leave his body. Nothing could make the powers of darkness quit their hold of so great a prize. As David again has it (and still, no doubt, prophetically of Christ, in this his last and great scene of misery) in Psalm xxii. 2, "I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent." He seems here to describe this "man of sorrow" at his night-agonies and devotions in the garden, as well as groaning out the inward pangs of his soul on the day of his crucifixion. There was no distinction of night and day during his sufferings; but, without any lucid intervals of comfort, he was under one continued darkness of desertion. Hence we have the like pathetical outcry again in Psalm xxxix. 13, "O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength." He begged of God but to grant him so much as a little breathing-time, and for a while to intermit the strokes of his fury. For, when there is no release to be had from wrath, the next mitigation is to have some respite under it; the nature of man being so very impotent and feeble, that it is not able to bear a continual pleasure, and much

less a continual sorrow, This it was that made Job's affliction hardly to be paralleled or expressed, that so many killing mischiefs and disasters came thronging, as it were, one in the neck of another. No sooner was one sad story ended, but another presently began. So that his heart was so employed and taken up in admitting and drinking in the sorrow that still came flowing into it, that it had no truce or relaxation to utter or discharge it; like a man receiving money faster than he can tell it: his incomes nonplus his accounts. In which, and the like cases, God's hand does not only strike, but, as it is emphatically in Psalm xxxviii. 2, "it also presseth the soul." And what is pressure, but the continuation of a blow? Nay, what is hell itself, but sorrow without intermission?

4. The height and greatness of this spiritual trouble appears from its violent and more than ordinary manifestation of itself in outward signs and effects. A strange and supernatural instance of which we have in our Saviour, in the sad preliminaries of his passion. The inward chafings and agitations of his struggling soul forcing a way through his body, by a sweat, even of blood, and opening all his veins, by an inward sense of something sharper than the impression of any lance or spear from without. And generally, in the very course of nature, when a thing, lodged or enclosed any where breaks forth, it is because it finds no room for an abode within. Outward eruptions are the undoubted arguments of an inward fulness. Nor does this at all contradict what I had said before of such a vehement sorrow's manifesting itself in silence and astonishment; for that is only at some times, and at some certain degrees, from which it often varies; as even our Saviour himself, while upon the cross, was not yet always crying out. But besides, even in the midst of this silence, there are other ways, by which such a trouble will sufficiently declare itself to the discernment of an ordinary eye. For while the tongue is silent, the countenance and conversation may speak aloud; and when we cannot hear sorrow speak, yet we may hear it groan; and when it is not to be known by its voice, it may be traced by its tears. Shame and sorrow, those twin-children of sin, are seldom deep in the heart, but they are apparent in the face. It is hard to stifle or suppress any natural affection. But this trouble of conscience, as it is above a man's strength to conquer, so it is beyond his art to conceal it. It is scarce possible for a man to lie under the torments of the gout or the stone, without roaring out his sense of them; but the torments of conscience are as much sharper and more affecting than these, as the perceptions of the soul are quicker than those of the body. It is the load upon the heart that gives vociferation to its grief, like the weights of a clock, that cause it to be heard.

Add to this the drooping paleness and dejection of the looks, the mournful cloud upon the brow, the damp and melancholy

covering the whole face; all of them the infallible signs of such a grief as will be sure to discover its abode by its effects: and such as made Christ himself so doleful a spectacle of misery, as to draw that compassionate exclamation, even from Pilate, John xix. 5, "Behold the man!" "My moisture," says David, who (as we have observed already) spoke most of these things typically of our Saviour, "is turned into the drought of summer," Psalm xxxii. 4. His grief had sucked up all his radical juices, and reduced him even to a skeleton. So that he might well say, in Psalm xxii. 17, "I may tell all my bones;" while one might not only stand staring and looking upon him, but through him also. Such impressions will trouble of conscience make sometimes even upon the body; all which outward symptoms will be found undeniable arguments of the surpassing greatness of it, even upon this account, that they are sure indications of the excess of any worldly trouble. For how easily may the loss of a friend or an estate be read in the countenance! When we are bereaved of our earthly contents, *prorumpunt lacrymæ;* and it is not in our power to stop those floodgates of sorrow.

Now, though I must confess that the spiritual sorrow that we have been discoursing of, does not always work over in such sensible, passionate signs, as worldly grief uses to do, and consequently is not certainly and universally to be measured by them; yet sometimes it has them all, and, if genuine and true, can never be wholly without some of them. And that man who has tears to spend at the memorial of a lost friend, but none to shed at the thoughts of a lost innocence, a wasted conscience, and a provoked God, has but too much cause to suspect the truth of his sorrow and the goodness of his heart.

5. And lastly, The transcendent greatness of this spiritual trouble may be gathered from those horrid effects it has had upon persons not upheld under it by divine grace. This, indeed, could not be the case of our Saviour; no, not in the greatest height of his passion; God, as I may so speak, supporting him with one arm, while he was smiting him with the other. But the force and activity of every cause is to be discerned and measured only by its utmost effect. And this trouble of mind actually does its utmost only upon such persons as are abandoned of the forementioned supports of grace. For in others, whom Heaven deals with upon different terms, as soon as it has worked itself almost up to its fatal crisis, mercy steps in, stanches the bleeding wound, and will not suffer it to destroy, where God intends it only to prove.

Now both history and experience testify what tragical ends men deserted by God, under the troubles of a wounded spirit, have been brought into. One man, after he has been grappling with these terrors for some time, has at length drowned himself. Another has been so pursued and wearied with the tormenting

thoughts of his sin, that he has sought for an antidote in poison, and even chose to end his grief with his days. Which, surely, are proofs clear enough to evince the insufferable torments of a guilty, inflamed conscience, in persons finally forsaken by God. Nor are those troubles at all less in persons truly pious, during a state of desertion: as may appear from those near approaches that even such persons, in such condition, have made to these dismal outrages upon themselves. For some have been so far left to themselves, as even to intend and resolve upon self-murder; and nothing has been wanting but the last execution. Though they have not actually drowned themselves, yet they have stood pausing upon the brink of destruction; and though they have not used the fatal knife, yet they have prepared it. From whence it is evident, that, for the time, they suffer the same troubles of mind that the wicked do: and that one do not perish under them, as well as the other, it is not because some lie under a greater measure of these terrors, and some a less; but because, under the same equal proportion, God powerfully upholds some, and lets others fall.

And thus I have done with the second thing proposed; which was to show wherein the excessive greatness of the trouble of a wounded spirit manifests itself: I proceed now to the

III. Which is to show, *by what ways and means this trouble is brought upon the soul.* I shall instance in four.

1. The first is by dreadful reflections upon the divine justice, as provoked. As soon as ever the soul has eaten of the forbidden fruit of sin, the flaming sword of vengeance presently appears: for sin, being properly a breach of the law, and the law being under the defence and tuition of God's justice, the soul cannot reflect upon its sin, but it must also cast its eye upon that which it does essentially relate to, the law; and, in a violated law, it cannot but see an affronted lawgiver. And in this case, the divine justice does as naturally catch hold of, and prey upon sin, as a devouring flame does upon flax or stubble. "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity," says David, Psalm cxxx. 3, "O Lord, who could stand?" Justice is a plentiful argument of terror, considered by any one that has guilt and understanding too: for all the calamities in the world, which so afflict and pester mankind, are but the products of justice. Justice meeting with sin, is a word comprising all the evils that God can afflict, or man endure. For when we view prisons, dungeons, hospitals, those habitations of misery, the general motto and superscription upon them all ought to be, "Justice." It goes about the world, like God's destroying angel, with a sword in its hand. Read over all that long black catalogue of curses in Deut. xxviii., and they are all but a short essay, or specimen, of that vengeance that divine justice has in reserve for sin; and but a slight foretaste of those

pains, that this life, indeed, may begin, but extremity and perpetuity must complete.

But neither can the miseries of this world or the next, or both together, represent the justice of God half so terrible to any apprehensive minds, as the sufferings of our Saviour upon the cross. For if, when justice called for satisfaction, God spared not his only Son, the Son whom he infinitely loved, Matt. iii. 17; the Son who pleased him in all things, John iv. 34; but gave him up to the most barbarous treatment that rage and malice could invent; and, after that, to a cruel, ignominious death; what can the conscience of a sinful man find out to screen itself by, from the same justice appearing against it in vindication of a transgressed law, calling for nothing less in recompence than the soul of the transgressor? Not only conscience, but common sense, must and will make this dreadful inference: if these things were "done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?" The flame that could but scorch that, must inevitably consume this.

2. Those wounds are inflicted upon the spirit or conscience by fearful apprehensions of the divine mercy, as abused. God's justice, we have seen, is of itself sufficiently terrible; but when mercy, the only thing that should interpose, and ward off the fiery blows of it, is gone, it must needs be intolerable: it must break in upon the soul like a mighty overbearing torrent when the bank is down; nothing can oppose or hinder the fury of its progress. Offended justice ministers abundant reason of fear; but abused mercy seems to cut off all ground of hope. For a man to affront him who is to be witness in a cause against him, justly renders the success of it dubious; but to injure his advocate, who alone is to stand between him and his accuser, must, of doubtful, make it desperate and deplorable. To sin against mercy, is to sin against our last remedy. For is there any third attribute in the divine nature, that can save him, who has God's justice for his enemy, and his mercy not for his friend? Is there any thing that can restore that person who stands lost and bankrupt, both upon the score of law and gospel too? If mercy condemns, what can pardon! But, above all, if the mercies and tenderness of a Saviour, bleeding, suffering, and at length giving up his very life a sacrifice for sin, and a ransom for sinners, cannot speak comfort to a wounded spirit, must not the wound prove deadly and incurable? And yet, since the benefit of all those sufferings is dealt forth only upon certain conditions, may not the remembrance of some sins justly render the conscience very doubtful, whether a man may plead any interest in them, or not? For what is Christ upon the cross to one that will not be crucified with him? or what is a Saviour, dying for sins, to a man that delights in them? Can he claim any benefit by that blood which his conscience is charging him with the guilt of?

These are such considerations as cannot but wound and terrify

a thoughtful conscience: next to which, in the present case, came in also the stings and remorses of natural ingenuity; a principle that men scarce ever wholly shake off, as long as they carry any thing of human nature about them. And when this shall appear as a second to conscience in God's quarrel, and upbraid a man for all his backslidings and apostasies, telling him, with the greatest bitterness of taunting reproach, These are the compassions thou hast abused, these are the bowels thou hast kicked against, these the wounds thou hast renewed upon thy Saviour, and this the blood that thou hast trampled upon; reminding him also of the most signal and eminent deliverances vouchsafed him throughout his life by the same hand of mercy;—how that at such a time, under such a distress, when his sin mocked him, and the world despised him, when his heart failed him, and his friends forsook him, yet the goodness of God still stood by him to comfort and support him;—how that it delivered him from such a danger and such an enemy, such a sickness and such a plunge, from which all his own act and reason could never have contrived his escape:—how, I say, when the Spirit of God shall enliven and stir up those remainders of natural ingenuity in the sinner's breast, thus to expostulate and debate the case with him in the behalf of abused mercy, every such word will pierce like a dagger to his heart, and strike like a dart into his entrails. Common humanity will be his judge, and conscience his executioner.

3. The spirit comes to be wounded and brought under this extreme anguish by God's withdrawing his presence and the sense of his love from it, as he does sometimes for a season even from the best of men; hiding himself from those whom it is impossible for him to forsake: which was the very case and condition of our Saviour, making that vehement outcry under a present apprehension that God had forsaken him, and cast off all the tenderness of a father, while he was inflicting upon him such exquisite torments, as one would think it too much for a father but to look upon. "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled," says David, Psalm xxx. 7: for all the joy of created beings streams by natural and immediate efflux from the divine presence, as that vital heat and warmth that animates all things here below, comes by direct emanation from that plentiful fountain of it, the sun. And consequently, when a cloud shall interpose between us and the presence of God, the terrors of the law, and the fears of provoked justice and affronted mercy cannot but rush in upon the conscience with a much greater force than at other times. As malignant vapours that infect the air have, after the sun is set, and the light withdrawn, a much more powerful influence upon it than they can have in the day, God's suspending the light and beams of his countenance will cause such "a darkness as may be felt:" and even the strictest livers, and most improved Christians are forced to feel the heavy, dispiriting

damps of it, when God deserts them. The ways by which God discovers himself to, and hides himself from the souls of men, are strange and unconceivable; but whensoever he does either, the soul is so nearly and sensibly affected with it, that it presently and certainly understands its condition: indeed, as certainly as a man finds and feels in himself, when he sickens and when he recovers.

God sometimes writes bitter things against a man, shows him his old sins in all their terrifying crimson circumstances, leaves him in the sad deeps of despair to himself, and his own pitiful strengths, to encounter the threats of the law, the assaults of his implacable enemy; in which forlorn estate is not such a one much like a poor traveller losing his way at midnight, and surprised with a violent storm besides? He has darkness round about him, hears nothing but storms and thunder above him, and knows not one step of his way. Such a one is a man deserted by God, whether he looks inwards or upwards; nothing but horror and darkness, confusion and mistake, attend his condition.

It is reported to be the custom in some countries, that when a judge sits upon the condemnation of a malefactor, there is a curtain drawn before him, so that the condemned person cannot see his judge. And thus it is often between God and a wounded spirit: it hears indeed from him a condemning voice, but cannot see his face; and this is horror upon horror, it heightens the condemnation, and makes the sentence of death sharper than the infliction.

4. And lastly, These wounding perplexities are brought upon the soul by God's giving commission to the tempter more than usually to trouble and disquiet it; for Satan is truly and properly the great troubler of Israel. He was so even to him who "knew no sin:" for as in our Saviour's very entrance into his ministry he tempted him, Matt. iv., so, towards the close, both of that and his life too, he troubled him: for all that was done by the cruel instruments of his bitter passion, was done by his direct instigation, in Luke xxii. 53, "This is your hour," says Christ, "and the power of darkness." There is a certain hour, or critical time, in which God suffers the powers of darkness to afflict and vex those that are dearest to him. And if it could be so with one perfectly innocent, how much worse must it needs be, when this mortal enemy of mankind has to deal with sinners! whom it is as natural for him to trouble for sin, as to tempt to it: and as it is common with him, before sin is committed, to make it appear less in the sinner's eye than really it is, so after the commission, if it be possible, he will represent it greater. When God shall leave the computing of our sins to him, where the law writes our debts but fifty, this unjust steward will set down fourscore. If the malice of hell, the wit, industry, and importunity of the tempter, having such a theme as the guilt of

sin and the curse of the law to enlarge upon, can do any thing, then shall the sinner find, by woful experience, that he could not with more art and earnestness allure to presumption, than he can now terrify into despair. He that so fawningly enticed the soul to sin, will now as bitterly upbraid it for having sinned. The same hand that laid the bait and the corn to draw the silly fowl into the net, when it is once in, will have its life for coming thither.

Satan never so cruelly insults and plays the tyrant as in this case. If God casts down the soul, he will trample upon it. He will set a new stamp and name upon every sin. Every backsliding shall be total apostasy. Every sin against light and knowledge shall be heightened into the sin against the Holy Ghost. The conscience shall not be able to produce one argument for itself, but he will retort it. If it shall plead former assurance of God's favour, from the inward witness of his Spirit, Satan would persuade the soul that it was but a spirit of delusion. If it shall argue an interest in God's promises from former obedience, as a fruit of that faith that never fails, Satan will tell the soul, that it cannot prove its former obedience to have proceeded from such a faith, since even a hypocrite may go very far. And lastly, if it would draw comfort from that abundant redemption that the death of Christ offers to all that are truly sensible of their sins, Satan will reply, that to such as, by relapsing into sin, have "trampled under foot the blood of the covenant, there remains no further propitiation for sin." Now, with these and the like rejoinders, will he endeavour to baffle and invalidate all a sinner's pretences to pardon. And when God shall not only permit, but, what is more, judicially bid him use his diabolical skill in troubling and vexing a wounded spirit, those arguments that of themselves were able to amaze the heart, being urged home by such a sophister, will ever break and confound it.

And thus I have shown four several ways by which the spirit comes to be thus wounded and afflicted, which was the third thing proposed to be handled. Pass we now to the

IV. Which is to show *what is God's end and design in casting men into such a perplexed condition.* Concerning which, as we are to remember that I shew at first that the subject of these excessive heart-wounding troubles were both the elect and the reprobate, both the godly and the wicked, so we are to know further, that God has a very different design in bringing these terrors upon each of them. And

1. For the wicked or reprobate. It is evident, that whensoever God brings these into such a condition of horror, it is to them but the beginnings of sorrow, and an entrance into those torments which shall abide upon them for ever. It is but the first-fruits of hell, and the earnest of their damnation. But then,

2. For the pious and sincere. God sometimes brings this anguish upon their spirit for a twofold end, very different from the former. As

(1.) To embitter sin to them. Nothing does or can leave a more abiding impression upon the mind than misery escaped. He surely cannot but remember the battle who is always looking upon his scars. A man, by revoking and recollecting within himself former passages, will be still apt to inculcate these sad memoirs to his conscience. This is that sin that cost me so many doubtful distracting thoughts about my eternal condition: this is that sin that nailed my Saviour to the cross, that forced the thorns into his head, and thrust the spear into his heart; and shall I now, after all this, cast a pleasing eye upon a mortal, known, experimented mischief? Shall I take that fire into my bosom, that was so likely to have consumed me? Shall I again parley with that serpent that has so often beguiled me?

If the sight of other men's calamities will add a caution where it finds consideration, should not the remembrance of our own do it much more? Propriety in misery notes it with a lasting character. And this let every one, who wears the name of a Christian, know, that he does but usurp that name, that can look upon Christ's sufferings otherwise than as his own, or pretend to any benefit from them, without first owning a propriety in them. And then, if all those sufferings were but the final consequents of sin, with what heart can that man, who accounts himself really a sharer in them, fall afresh to the commission of those sins, of the direful effects of which he stands convinced by so terrible a demonstration? Certainly such a one (unless deserted by humanity as well as religion) cannot but continually carry about him arguments enough lying close at his heart wherewith to answer and repel either the most furious or most plausible temptation. He would baffle and cast off the tempter from the very topic of his own malicious methods, and stab and fling back the base proposal in his own face; from this very consideration, that he himself would be the first and fiercest to accuse him for that very sin which he was now enticing him to.

For if God has implanted such a principle of caution in the very brutes, from a mere suggestion of nature, that the net or the snare, once escaped and got out of, will not easily be entered into again, certainly these mere animals must not be presumed to act more warily from a bare natural instinct, than a regenerate person shall from a principle infused from above. Though the truth is, one would think, bare nature might be enough to preserve a man in this case: for he who has but a memory cannot possibly want arguments against his sin. To consider and reflect will secure him from a relapse.

(2.) God's other end in wounding the spirit of a truly pious and sincere person, is to endear and enhance the value of return-

ing mercy: for nothing can give the soul so high a taste of mercy as the consideration of past mercy. When a man stands safely landed upon the desired haven, it cannot but be an unspeakable delight to him to reflect upon what he has escaped; they are the dangers of the sea, which commend and set off the pleasures and securities of the shore. The passage out of one contrary estate into another gives us a quicker and more lively sense of that into which we pass; for as when the wicked perish, the remembrance of their former pleasures and enjoyments mightily heightens the apprehensions of their present torments: so when the righteous are re-admitted into fresh assurances of God's favour, all the former sad conflicts they had with the dreadful sense of his wrath serve highly to put a lustre upon present grace. A reconcilement after a falling out, a refreshing spring after a sharp winter, a glorious and triumphant ascension after a bitter and a bloody passion, are things not only commended by their own native goodness, but also by the extreme malignity of their contraries; things that raise enjoyment into rapture, and common pleasure into transport and ecstasy. As that which put a peculiar honour and circle of glory about the head of Christ, was not so much God's exalting and giving him "a name at which all things in heaven and earth should bow," as that he should rise to such a stupendous height of royalty by a wretched, infamous, and accursed death; that from being the scorn of men, he should command the adoration of angels; and, from suffering amongst felons and malefactors, ascend "far above principalities and powers." Such are the astonishing methods of divine mercy, where God afflicts with the mind of a father, and kills for no other purpose but that he may raise again.

In Psalm cxxvi. 1, 2, "When the Lord turned the captivity of Sion," says the psalmist, "then were we like to them that dream." So here in this spiritual deliverance, when a man passes from the agonies and distresses of a wounded spirit into a condition of joy and sereneness of mind, grounded upon a rational hope of God's reconcilement with him, he is so overcome and ravished with delight, that he doubts almost of the reality of what he sees and feels, and even questions the truth of actual fruition.

And thus much for the fourth particular proposed from the words, which was to show *what God's ends and designs are in casting men into such a perplexed condition.* Pass we now to the

V. And last, which was to draw some *useful inferences* from the whole. And for this, to prevent both the mistakes of the weak, and the misconstructions of the reverse, we shall, from the foregoing discourse, infer these three things by way of caution.

1. Let no man presume to pronounce any thing scoffingly of the present, or severely of the final estate of such as he finds exercised with the distracting troubles of a wounded spirit. Let

not all this seem to thee but an effect of thy brother's weakness or melancholy: for he who was "the great and the holy One," he whom God is said to have "made strong for himself," he who was "the Lord mighty to save," and he who must be thy Saviour if ever thou art saved; even he passed under all these agonies, endured all these horrors and consternations; and to that extremity, that wrath, and death, and hell itself seemed all with one united force to have poured in upon, and taken absolute possession of his amazed faculties.

We live in an age of blaspheming all that is sacred, and scoffing at all that is serious: God forgive us for it, and revenge not upon us those uncontrolled blasphemies and lewdnesses, which, in the sense of all wise and good men, proclaim us ripe for judgment. But surely, to scoff in this case, over and above the impiety of it, is cruel, barbarous, and inhuman; indeed, more cruel by far, than to jeer a man upon the rack, or under the last executions of the most remorseless justice; it is indeed to act over the execrable malice of the Jews, mocking and flouting at our Saviour upon the very cross. Besides that, it may chance to prove a dangerous piece of raillery, to be passing jests where God is so much in earnest, especially since there is no man breathing but carries about him a sleeping lion in his bosom, which God can and may, when he pleases, rouse up and let loose upon him, so as to tear and worry him to that degree, that in the very anguish of his soul he shall choose death rather than life, and be glad to take sanctuary in a quiet grave. But then further, as this dismal estate of spiritual darkness is a condition by no means to be scoffed at, so neither ought it to represent the person under it to any one as a reprobate or castaway. For he who is in this case, is under the immediate hand of God, who alone knows what will be the issue of these his dealings with him.

We have seen and shown, that God may carry on very different designs in the same dispensation; and consequently, that no man, from the bare feeling of God's hand, can certainly understand his mind.

2. In the next place, let no secure sinner applaud or soothe up himself in the presumed safety of his spiritual estate, because he finds no such trouble or anguish upon his spirit for sin. For as the best and most beloved of God's saints have lain under this doleful and desponding condition, so, for the most part, the vilest persons breathing have passed their lives freely and jocundly, without the least misgiving or suspicion about their eternal concerns, who yet at length have met with a full payment of wrath and vengeance in the other world for all their confidence and jollity in this.

It is a common saying and observation in divinity, that where despair has slain its thousands, presumption has destroyed its ten thousands. The agonies of the former are indeed more terrible,

but the securities of the latter not at all less fatal. And he who is carried off by a lethargy or an apoplex, though he dies more easily, yet he dies as surely as he whose soul is forced and fired out of his body by the ragings of a burning fever.

The most confident sinner living knows not how soon God may deal with him in this manner: and then the sins that lie still and quiet in his mind for the present, when the fire of God's wrath comes to be applied to them, will be found to be quite other things. It is the very same water that cools and refreshes at one time, and that is made to scald and kill at another.

All which considered, if any one can be secure in his vice, let him be secure still; only let him know, that if ever God thinks fit to wound his spirit, and to set the sense of sin home to his conscience, it will of the most profane, daring, and resolved debauchee, make him the most pitiful, abject, broken-minded creature under heaven; and take too fast a hold of his stout heart, to be either hectored, or drunk, or drolled away.

2. And lastly, let no person, on the contrary, exclude himself from the number of such as are sincere and truly regenerate, only because he never yet felt any of these amazing pangs of conscience for sin. For though God, out of his unsearchable counsel, is sometimes pleased to bring these terrors upon his saints, yet in themselves they are not things necessary to make men such. God knows the properest ways of bringing every soul to himself; and what he finds necessary for one, he does not always judge fit for another. No more trouble for sin is necessary to salvation, than so much as is sufficient to take a man off from sin. And if that be once done, he who is troubled for this, that he is not, as he thinks, troubled enough for his sins, gives an infallible proof, that he is not in love with them.

And therefore let such persons rather acknowledge the goodness of God towards them, and not quarrel with the great physician of souls, for having cured them by easy and gentle methods. It is the same God who speaks in thunders and earthquakes to the hearts of some sinners, and in a soft still voice to others. But whether in a storm or in a calm, in a cloud or in a sunshine, he is still that God who will in the end abundantly speak peace to all those who with humility and fear depend upon him for it.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

END OF VOLUME III.

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